MY
BOOK
Marcia Isaak

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Dickens' Stories About Children

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
ELIZABETH LODOR MERCHANT,
and illustrations by CLARA M. BURD

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Dickens' Stories

SUPPOSE we invent some moving pictures for ourselves. They shall be a procession of people, chiefly girls and boys, out of the land of make-believe. Each one will stay only a minute or two, leaving us to follow later if we like.

Here's a boy, ragged and forlorn, walking weary miles in the hope of finding a home. For days and days he trudges along toward London. Now we lose him in the crowded, narrow streets of a poor part of that city. As he disappears into a dark house we feel sure that many dangers lie ahead of him. We shall not be surprised to find him in a den of thieves.

Now comes a little girl, perhaps eleven or twelve years of age. By the hand she leads an old gentleman who looks lost and troubled. Both of them are neatly dressed, but they have a helpless air that makes us wonder what can become of them out in the big world.

See this big, rough dog, barking furiously at all passers-by. He stands on the steps of a stately house in a fine street and seems to warn everyone not to approach. But in a moment he turns and bounds through the open door behind him. There he is at an upper window with his mistress, a gentle-looking

girl who pats him and talks to him in a friendly way. Very likely he has been given to her by someone who knows that she is lonely.

What's this on the screen? Is't a boat? But it is on dry land, far up on the seashore where the waves cannot reach it. There's a low door on one side, like a cottage entrance. It stands open so that we may look in. Sure enough! It's an old boat turned into a house. Before the comfortable fireplace stands a big man in the clothes of a fisherman, and in a little seat close to the fire are two children, a girl and a boy. It must be a pleasant place to stay in; everyone looks kind and cheerful.

The next picture is a great contrast. It shows a lonely graveyard, at dusk. A very little boy is looking rather sorrowfully at the tombstones, as if they bore the names of some of his people. Suddenly, a rough, desperate-looking man appears out of the shadows and seizes the terrified child. What will become of him, all alone and entirely helpless?

Did you ever see such a fat boy as this next one, who stands knocking at a house door as if he had a message to give? Do look at him! His eyes are shut! He seems to be fast asleep, but his hand keeps on moving. The door opens and a maid stands staring at him; still he's asleep. Would good things to eat interest him enough to keep him awake? If the maid had a plateful of cakes in her hand, perhaps he'd come out of this doze.

We've seen these pieces of stories. Don't you think they are interesting? The entire story in each case would be more so. Instead of unfinished fragments we may see the whole if we step into the make-believe land out of which they walked on the screen of our imagination. That land is created for us in the many books written by Charles Dickens. He was an Englishman who lived and wrote a long time ago, but the people he shows us were like ourselves in their feelings and often in their circumstances.

Dickens had been a poor boy, with few years of regular schooling. His father was not successful in business, and he had to earn money very early. If you read the book called *David Copperfield*, you will see in the part that tells how David had to work when he was only ten years old, something like what had happened in Dickens' childhood. Then, too, you may read there how steadily he kept on, using every chance for education, and how he taught himself stenography and became a very successful reporter. He never wrote a complete story of his life; others have done that since his death. However, through his novels there are scattered bits which reflect actual experiences, the most important being these just referred to in *David Copperfield*.

It is interesting to know that he was very fond of long walks; his book people are often shown to us taking that kind of pleasure. He loved dramatic performances and frequently invented such entertainments

for his children and his friends, taking part himself in the scenes. When you read *Nicholas Nickleby* you'll find the hero earning his living for a time with a company of traveling players. Dickens never did that, but he had acted often enough to know something about it. He did read in public from his books, and made two trips to this country for that purpose. Immense audiences gathered to hear him and he made many friends here.

Among the reasons that people all over the world have liked Dickens so much is that he was always engaged, in one way or another, in trying to make life better and happier for others. He wrote books to show the evil effects of some existing laws and customs; for instance, he attacked the old usage of putting people into prison for debt. In another book he pictured the cruel abuse of children in some out-of-the-way boarding schools. People were influenced by his books to correct such conditions.

Another reason for his popularity is his humor. All over the world people enjoy laughing at and with such a character as Sam Weller in *The Pickwick Papers*. Then, too, he can make his readers smile at one minute and hold back the tears at the next. We are sure to have a friendly feeling for an author who can do both these things skilfully.

Yet another attraction in Dickens' books is the multitude of children, both boys and girls. Before his time, few authors introduced children in any con-

siderable numbers into their stories. Indeed, even yet no one else has given us so many; nor has anyone else so interwoven their affairs with the fabric of adult stories. Oliver Twist, David Copperfield, Paul and Florence Dombey, Jenny Wren, poor Jo, the Fat Boy, the Marchioness, Smike, Little Nell, Pip, Agnes Wickfield, Tiny Tim—they are known wherever Dickens' books have gone; often they are actually better known than his grown-up characters are.

You want these boys and girls for your friends. The very best way to have that pleasure is to read the entire books, every one of them. However, they are rather long, and there are many of them. When you do read them, your pleasure will be all the greater for knowing some of the characters in advance. Here is a group of them presented as far as possible in Dickens' own words. After each story you will find the name of the book from which it is taken, so that you will know what to ask for when you are ready to read it as a whole. Some of these days perhaps you'll pay a visit to London, and there, in the South Kensington Museum, you may see the actual manuscripts in Dickens' own handwriting, as he sent them to be printed. Fortunately for you and me we can get them all in any library and in any book store, and enjoy them in our own homes. Dickens belongs to you and to me, and to all the world.

—Elizabeth Lodor Merchant

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LITTLE NELL

THE house was one of those receptacles for old and curious things, which seem to crouch in odd corners of the town, and to hide their musty treasures from the public eye in jealousy and distrust. There were suits of mail standing like ghosts in armor, here and there; fantastic carvings brought from monkish cloisters; rusty weapons of various kinds; distorted figures in china and wood, and iron and ivory; tapestry, and strange furniture that might have been designed in dreams; and in the old, dark, murky rooms there lived together an old man and a child—his grandchild, Little Nell. Solitary and monotonous as was her life, the innocent and cheerful spirit of the child found happiness in all things, and through the dim rooms of the old curiosity shop Little Nell went singing, moving with gay and lightsome step.

But gradually over the old man, to whom she was so tenderly attached, there stole a sad change. He became thoughtful, dejected, and wretched. He had no sleep or rest but that which he took by day in his easy chair; for every night, and all night long, he was away from home. To the child it seemed that her grandfather's love for her increased, even

with the hidden grief by which she saw him struck down. And to see him sorrowful, and not to know the cause of his sorrow; to see him growing pale and weak under his agony of mind, so weighed upon her gentle spirit that at times she felt as if her heart must break.

At last the time came when the old man's feeble frame could bear up no longer against his hidden care. A raging fever seized him, and, as he lay delirious or insensible through many weeks, Nell learned that the house which sheltered them was theirs no longer; that in the future they would be very poor; that they would scarcely have bread to eat.

At length the old man began to mend, but his mind was weakened.

He would sit for hours together, with Nell's small hand in his, playing with the fingers, and sometimes stopping to smooth her hair or kiss her brow; and when he saw that tears were glistening in her eyes, he would look amazed. As the time drew near when they must leave the house, he made no reference to the necessity of finding other shelter. He had an indistinct idea that the child was desolate and in need of help; though he seemed unable to contemplate their real position more distinctly. But a change came upon him one evening as he and Nell sat silently together.

"Let us speak softly, Nell," he said. "Hush! for if they knew our purpose they would say that I

was mad, and take thee from me. We will not stop here another day. We will travel afoot through the fields and woods, and trust ourselves to God in the places where He dwells. Tomorrow morning, dear, we'll turn our faces from this scene of sorrow, and be as free and happy as the birds."

The child's heart beat high with hope and confidence. She had no thought of hunger, or cold, or thirst, or suffering. To her it seemed that they might beg their way from door to door in happiness, as long as they were together.

When the day began to glimmer, they stole out of the house, and, passing into the street, stood still.

"Which way?" asked the child.

The old man looked irresolutely and helplessly at her, and shook his head. It was plain that she was thenceforth his guide and leader. The child felt it, but had no doubts or misgivings, and, putting her hand in his, led him gently away. Forth from the city, while it yet slumbered, went the two poor adventurers, wandering they knew not whither.

They passed through the long, deserted streets, in the glad light of early morning, until these streets dwindled away, and the open country was about them. They walked all day, and slept that night at a small cottage where beds were let to travelers. The sun was setting on the second day of their journey, and they were jaded and worn out with walking, when, following a path which led through a church

yard to the town where they were to spend the night, they fell in with two traveling showmen, exhibitors of a Punch and Judy show. They raised their eyes when the old man and his young companion were close upon them. One of them, the actual exhibitor, no doubt, was a little, merry-faced man with a twinkling eye and a red nose, who seemed to have unconsciously imbibed something of his hero's character. The other—that was he who took the money—had rather a careful and cautious look, which was perhaps inseparable from his occupation also.

The merry man was the first to greet the strangers with a nod; and following the old man's eyes, he observed that perhaps that was the first time he had seen a Punch off the stage. Punch, it may be remarked, seemed to be pointing with the tip of his cap to a most flourishing epitaph, and to be chuckling over it with all his heart.

"Why do you come here to do this?" said the old man, sitting down beside them, and looking at the figures with extreme delight.

"Why, you see," rejoined the little man, "we're putting up for tonight at the public house yonder, and it wouldn't do to let 'em see the present company undergoing repair."

"No!" cried the old man, making signs to Nell to listen, "why not, eh? Why not?"

"Because it would destroy all the delusion and

take away all the interest, wouldn't it?" replied the man. "Would you care a ha'penny for the Lord Chancellor if you know'd him in private and without his wig?—certainly not."

"Good!" said the old man, venturing to touch one of the puppets, and drawing away his hand with a shrill laugh. "Are you going to show 'em to-night—are you?"

"That is the intention, governor," replied the other, "and unless I'm much mistaken, Tommy Codlin is a-calculating at this minute what we've lost through your coming upon us. Cheer up, Tommy, it can't be much."

The little man accompanied these latter words with a wink, expressive of the estimate he had formed of the travelers' pocketbook.

To this Mr. Codlin, who had a surly, grumbling manner, replied, as he twitched Punch off the tombstone and flung him into the box:

"I don't care if we haven't lost a farden, but you're too free. If you stood in front of the curtain and see the public's faces as I do, you'd know human natur' better."

Turning over the figures in the box as one who knew and despised them, Mr. Codlin drew one forth and held it up for the inspection of his friend:

"Look here; here's all this Judy's clothes falling to pieces again. You haven't got a needle and thread, I suppose?"

The little man shook his head and scratched it ruefully, as he contemplated this severe indisposition of a principal performer. Seeing that they were at a loss, the child said, timidly:

"I have a needle, sir, in my basket, and thread, too. Will you let me try to mend it for you? I think I could do it neater than you could."

Even Mr. Codlin had nothing to urge against a proposal so seasonable. Nell, kneeling down beside the box, was soon busily engaged in her task, and accomplishing it to a miracle.

While she was thus engaged, the merry little man, Short, by name, looked at her with an interest which did not appear to be diminished when he glanced at her helpless companion. When she had finished her work he thanked her, and inquired whither they were traveling.

"N—no farther tonight, I think," said the child, looking toward her grandfather.

"If you're wanting a place to stop at," the man remarked, "I should advise you to take up at the same house with us. That's it. The long, low, white house there. It's very cheap."

When they had been refreshed, the whole house hurried away into an empty stable where the show stood, and where, by the light of a few flaring candles stuck around a hoop which hung by a line from the ceiling, it was to be forthwith exhibited.

And now Mr. Thomas Codlin took his station

on one side of the checked drapery which concealed the mover of the figures, and, putting his hands in his pockets, prepared to reply to all questions and remarks of Punch, and to make a dismal feint of being his most intimate private friend, of believing in him to the fullest and most unlimited extent, of knowing that he enjoyed day and night a merry and glorious existence in that temple, and that he was at all times and under every circumstance the same intelligent and joyful person that the spectators then beheld him.

The whole performance was applauded to the echo, and voluntary contributions were showered in with a liberality which testified yet more strongly to the general delight. Among the laughter none was more loud and frequent than the old man's. Nell's was unheard, for she, poor child, with her head drooping on his shoulder, had fallen asleep, and slept too soundly to be roused by any of his efforts to awaken her to a participation in his glee.

The supper was very good, but she was too tired to eat, and yet would not leave the old man until she had kissed him in his bed. He, happily insensible to every care and anxiety, sat listening with a vacant smile and admiring face to all that his new friends said; and it was not until they retired, yawning, to their room that he followed the child upstairs.

She had a little money, but it was very little, and when that was gone, they must begin to beg. There

was one piece of gold among it, and an emergency might come when its worth to them would be increased a hundredfold. It would be best to hide this coin, and never produce it unless their case was absolutely desperate, and no other resource was left them.

Her resolution taken, she sewed the piece of gold into her dress, and going to bed with a lighter heart sank into a deep slumber.

On the following morning the little man addressed himself to Nell, saying, "And where are you going today?"

"Indeed I hardly know—we have not determined yet," replied the child.

"We're going on to the races," said the little man. "If that's your way and you like to have us for company, let us travel together. If you prefer going alone, only say the word and you'll find that we shan't trouble you."

"We'll go with you," said the old man. "Nell—with them, with them."

The child considered for a moment, and reflecting that she must shortly beg, and could scarcely hope to do so at a better place than where crowds of rich ladies and gentlemen were assembled together for purposes of enjoyment and festivity, determined to accompany these men so far. She therefore thanked the little man for his offer, and said, glancing timidly toward his friend, that they would go along as far as the race town.

They made two long days' journey with their new companions, passing through villages and towns, and meeting increasing crowds of people who were also going to the races.

And now they had come to the time when they must beg their bread. Soon after sunrise the morning after they reached the town, she stole out, and, rambling into some fields at a short distance, plucked a few wild roses and such humble flowers, purposing to make them into little nosegays and offer them to the ladies in the carriages when the company arrived. Her thoughts were not idle while she was thus employed. When she returned and was seated beside the old man, tying her flowers together, while the two men lay dozing in a corner, she plucked him by the sleeve, and, slightly glancing toward them, said in a low voice:

"Grandfather, don't look at those I talk of, and don't seem as if I spoke of anything but what I am about. What was that you told me before we left the old house—that if they knew what we were going to do, they would say that you were mad, and part us?"

The old man turned to her with an aspect of wild terror; but she checked him by a look. Bidding him hold some flowers while she tied them up, and so bringing her lips closer to his ear, she said:

"I know that was what you told me. You needn't speak, dear. I recollect it very well. It is

not likely that I should forget it. Grandfather, these men, I am sure, suspect that we have secretly left our friends, and mean to carry us before some gentleman and have us taken care of and sent back. If you let your hand tremble so, we can never get away from them, but if you're only quiet now, we shall do so easily."

"How?" muttered the old man. "Dear Nell, how?"

"You're trembling again," said the child. "Keep close to me all day. Never mind them; don't look at them, but at me. I shall find a time when we can steal away. When I do, mind you come with me, and do not stop or speak a word. Hush! That's all."

"Halloo! what are you up to, my dear?" said Mr. Codlin, raising his head and yawning.

"Making some nosegays," the child replied. "I am going to try to sell some these three days of the races. Will you have one—as a present, I mean?"

Mr. Codlin would have risen to receive it, but the child hurried toward him and placed it in his hand, and he stuck it in his buttonhole.

As the morning wore on, the tents at the race course assumed a gayer and more brilliant appearance, and long lines of carriages came rolling softly on the turf. Black-eyed gypsy girls, hooded in showy handkerchiefs, sallied forth to tell fortunes, and pale, slender women with consumptive faces lingered upon the footsteps of ventriloquists and conjurers, and

counted the sixpences with anxious eyes long before they were gained. As many of the children as could be kept within bounds were stowed away, with all the other signs of dirt and poverty, among the donkeys, carts, and horses; and as many as could not be thus disposed of ran in and out in all intricate spots, crept between people's legs and carriage wheels, and came forth unharmed from under horses' hoofs. The dancing dogs, the stilts, the little lady and the tall man, and all the other attractions, with organs out of number and bands innumerable, emerged from the holes and corners in which they had passed the night, and flourished boldly in the sun.

Along the uncleared course Short led his party, sounding a brazen trumpet and reveling in the voice of Punch; and at his heels went Thomas Codlin, bearing the show as usual, and keeping his eye on Nell and her grandfather, as they rather lingered in the rear. The child bore upon her arm the little basket with her flowers, and sometimes stopped, with timid and modest looks, to offer them at some gay carriage.

Alas! there were many bolder beggars there, gypsies who promised husbands, and other adepts in their trade; and although some ladies smiled gently as they shook their heads, and others cried to the gentlemen beside them, "See what a pretty face!" they let the pretty face pass on, and never thought that it looked tired or hungry.

There was but one lady who seemed to understand the child, and she was one who sat alone in a handsome carriage. She motioned away a gypsy woman urgent to tell her fortune, saying that it was told already and had been for some years, but called the child toward her, and, taking her flowers, put money into her trembling hand, and bade her go home and stay at home.

Many a time they went up and down those long, long lines, seeing everything but the horses and the race; when the bell rang to clear the course, going back to rest among the carts and donkeys, and not coming out again until the heat was over. Many a time, too, was Punch displayed in the full zenith of his humor; but all this while the eye of Mr. Codlin was on them, and to escape unnoticed was impracticable.

At length, late in the day, Mr. Codlin pitched the show in a convenient spot, and the spectators were soon in the very triumph of the scene.

If they were ever to get away unseen, that was the very moment. Short was plying the quarter-staves vigorously and knocking the characters in the fury of the combat against the sides of the show; the people were looking on with laughing faces, and Mr. Codlin had relaxed into a grim smile as his roving eye detected hands going into waistcoat pockets. They seized the moment and fled.

They made a path through booths and carriages and throngs of people, and never once stopped to

look behind. The bell was ringing, and the course was cleared by the time they reached the ropes, but they dashed across it, insensible to the shouts and screeching that assailed them for breaking in upon its sanctity. Creeping under the brow of the hill at a quick pace, they made for the open fields.

That night they reached a little village in a woody hollow. The village schoolmaster, a good and gentle man, pitying their weariness, and attracted by the child's sweetness and modesty, gave them a lodging for the night; nor would he let them leave him until two days more had passed.

They journeyed on again by pleasant country lanes; and as they passed, watching the birds that perched and twittered in the branches overhead, or listening to the songs that broke the happy silence, their hearts were tranquil and serene. But by and by they came to a long, winding road which lengthened out far into the distance, and although they still kept on, it was at a much slower pace, for they were now very weary.

The afternoon had worn away into a beautiful evening, when they arrived at a point where the road made a sharp turn and struck across a common. On the border of this common, and close to the hedge which divided it from the cultivated fields, a caravan was drawn up to rest. By reason of its situation, they came so suddenly upon it that they could not have avoided it if they would.

It was not a shabby, dingy, dusty cart, but a smart little house upon wheels, with white dimity curtains festooning the windows, and window shutters of green picked out with panels of a staring red, in which happily contrasted colors the whole concern shone brilliant. Neither was it a poor caravan drawn by a single donkey or an emaciated horse, for a pair of horses in pretty good condition were released from the shafts and grazing on the frowzy grass. Neither was it a gypsy caravan, for at the open door (graced with a bright brass knocker) sat a Christian lady, stout and comfortable to look upon, who wore a large bonnet trembling with bows. And that it was not an unprovided or destitute caravan was clear from this lady's occupation, which was the very pleasant and refreshing one of taking tea. The tea things, including a bottle of rather suspicious character and a cold knuckle of ham, were set forth upon a drum, covered with a white napkin; and there, as if at the most convenient round table in all the world, sat this roving lady, taking her tea and enjoying the prospect.

It happened at that moment that the lady of the caravan had her cup (which, that everything about her might be of a stout and comfortable kind, was a breakfast cup) to her lips, and that having her eyes lifted to the sky in her enjoyment of the full flavor of her tea, it happened that being thus agreeably engaged, she did not see the travelers when they

first came up. It was not until she was in the act of setting down the cup, and drawing a long breath after the exertion of causing its contents to disappear, that the lady of the caravan beheld an old man and a young child walking slowly by, and glancing at her proceedings with eyes of modest but hungry admiration.

"Hey?" cried the lady of the caravan, scooping the crumbs out of her lap and swallowing the same before wiping her lips. "Yes, to be sure—who won the Helter-Skelter Plate, child?"

"Won what, ma'am?" asked Nell.

"The Helter-Skelter Plate at the races, child—the plate that was run for on the second day."

"On the second day, ma'am?"

"Second day! Yes, second day," repeated the lady, with an air of impatience. "Can't you say who won the Helter-Skelter Plate when you're asked the question civilly?"

"I don't know, ma'am."

"Don't know!" repeated the lady of the caravan; "why, you were there. I saw you with my own eyes."

Nell was not a little alarmed to hear this, supposing that the lady might be intimately acquainted with the firm of Short and Codlin; but what followed tended to reassure her.

"And very sorry I was," said the lady of the caravan, "to see you in company with a Punch—

a low, practical, vulgar wretch, that people should scorn to look at."

"I was not there by choice," returned the child; "we didn't know our way, and the two men were very kind to us, and let us travel with them. Do you—do you know them, ma'am?"

"Know 'em child?" cried the lady of the caravan, in a sort of shriek. "Know *them!* But you're young and inexperienced, and that's your excuse for asking sich a question. Do I look as if I know'd 'em? Does the caravan look as if *it* know'd 'em?"

"No, ma'am, no," said the child, fearing she had committed some grievous fault. "I beg your pardon."

The lady of the caravan was in the act of gathering her tea equipage together preparatory to clearing the table, but noting the child's anxious manner, she hesitated and stopped. The child courtesied, and giving her hand to the old man, had already got some fifty yards or so away, when the lady of the caravan called to her to return.

"Come nearer, nearer still," said she, beckoning to her to ascend the steps. "Are you hungry, child?"

"Not very, but we are tired, and it's—it *is* a long way—"

"Well, hungry or not, you had better have some tea," rejoined her new acquaintance. "I suppose you are agreeable to that, old gentleman?"

The grandfather humbly pulled off his hat and thanked her. The lady of the caravan then bade him come up the steps likewise, but the drum proving an inconvenient table for two, they descended again, and sat upon the grass, where she handed down to them the tea tray, the bread and butter, and the knuckle of ham.

"Set 'em out near the hind wheels, child, that's the best place," said their friend, superintending the arrangements from above. "Now hand up the teapot for a little more hot water and a pinch of fresh tea, and then both of you eat and drink as much as you can, and don't spare anything; that's all I ask of you."

After they had made a hearty meal, the mistress of the caravan invited them to ride along with her for a while, for which Nell thanked her with unaffected earnestness.

When they had traveled slowly forward for some short distance, Nell ventured to steal a look round the caravan and observe it more closely. One half of it—that moiety in which the comfortable proprietress was then seated—was carpeted, and so partitioned off at the farther end as to accommodate a sleeping place, constructed after the fashion of a berth on board ship, which was shaded, like the little windows, with fair white curtains, and looked comfortable enough, though by what kind of gymnastic exercise the lady of the caravan ever con-

trived to get into it was an unfathomable mystery. The other half served for a kitchen, and was fitted up with a stove whose small chimney passed through the roof.

The mistress sat looking at the child for a long time in silence, and then, getting up, brought out from a corner a large roll of canvas about a yard in width, which she laid upon the floor and spread open with her foot until it nearly reached from one end of the caravan to the other.

"There, child," she said, "read that."

Nell walked down it, and read aloud, in enormous black letters, the inscription, "JARLEY'S WAX-WORK."

"Read it again," said the lady, complacently.

"Jarley's Waxwork," repeated Nell.

"That's me," said the lady. "I am Mrs. Jarley."

Giving the child an encouraging look, the lady of the caravan unfolded another scroll, whereon was the inscription, "One hundred figures the full size of life"; and then another scroll, on which was written, "The only stupendous collection of real waxwork in the world"; and then several smaller scrolls, with such inscriptions as "Now exhibiting within"—"The genuine and only Jarley"—"Jarley's unrivaled collection"—"Jarley is the delight of the Nobility and Gentry"—"The Royal Family are the patrons of Jarley." When she had exhibited these leviathans of public announcement to the astonished child, she

brought forth specimens of the lesser fry in the shape of handbills, some of which were couched in the form of parodies on popular melodies, as "Believe me, if all Jarley's waxwork so rare"—"I saw thy show in youthful prime"—"Over the water to Jarley"; while, to consult all tastes, others were composed with a view to the lighter and more facetious spirits, as a parody on the favorite air of "If I had a donkey," beginning

> If I know'd a donkey wot wouldn't go
> To see MRS. JARLEY'S waxwork show,
> Do you think I'd acknowledge him?
> Oh, no, no!
> Then run to Jarley's——

besides several compositions in prose, purporting to be dialogues between the Emperor of China and an oyster.

"I never saw any waxwork, ma'am," said Nell. "Is it funnier than Punch?"

"Funnier!" said Mrs. Jarley, in a shrill voice. "It is not funny at all."

"Oh!" said Nell, with all possible humility.

"It isn't funny at all," repeated Mrs. Jarley. "It's calm and—what's that word again—critical?—no—classical, that's it—it's calm and classical. No low beatings and knockings about, no jokings and squeakings like your precious Punches, but always the same, with a constantly unchanging air of coldness and gentility; and so like life that, if waxwork

only spoke and walked about, you'd hardly kn the difference. I won't go so far as to say that, as is, I've seen waxwork quite like life, but I've certain seen some life that was exactly like waxwork."

This conference at length concluded, she bec oned Nell to sit down.

"And the old gentleman, too," said Mrs. Jarle "for I want to have a word with him. Do you wa a good situation for your granddaughter, maste If you do, I can put her in the way of getting or What do you say?"

"I can't leave her," answered the old man. "W can't separate. What would become of me witho her?"

"If you're really disposed to employ yourself said Mrs. Jarley, "there would be plenty for you do in the way of helping to dust the figures, a take the checks, and so forth. What I want yo granddaughter for is to point 'em out to the co pany; they would be soon learned, and she has way with her that people wouldn't think unpleasa though she *does* come after me; for I've been alwa accustomed to go around with visitors myself, whi I should keep on doing now, only that my spir make a little ease absolutely necessary. It's not common offer, bear in mind," said the lady, risi into the tone and manner in which she was accu tomed to address her audiences, "it's Jarley's wa work. remember. The duty's very light and gente

Nell plucked wild roses and made them into nosegays, while her grandfather sat near-by. (*See page 9.*)

the company particularly select, the exhibition takes place in assembly rooms, town halls, large rooms at inns, or auction galleries. There is none of your open-air wagrancy at Jarley's, recollect; there is no tarpaulin and sawdust at Jarley's, remember. Every expectation held out in the handbills is realized to the utmost, and the whole forms an effect of imposing brilliancy hitherto unrivaled in this kingdom. Remember that the price of admission is only sixpence, and that this is an opportunity which may never occur again!"

"We are very much obliged to you, ma'am," said Nell, "and thankfully accept your offer."

"And you'll never be sorry for it," returned Mrs. Jarley. "I'm pretty sure of that. As that's all settled, let us have a bit of supper."

Rumbling along with much noise, the caravan stopped at last at the place of exhibition, where Nell dismounted amidst an admiring group of children, who evidently supposed her to be an important item of the curiosities, and were fully impressed with the belief that her grandfather was a cunning device in wax. The chests were taken out of the van for the figures with all convenient dispatch, and taken in to be unlocked by Mrs. Jarley, who, attended by George and the driver, disposed their contents (consisting of red festoons and other ornamental devices in upholstery work) to the best advantage in the decoration of the room.

When the festoons were all put up as tastily as they might be, the stupendous collection was uncovered. There were displayed, on a raised platform some two feet from the floor, running round the room and parted from the rude public by a crimson rope, breast high, divers sprightly effigies of celebrated characters, singly and in groups, clad in glittering dresses of various climes and times and standing more or less unsteadily upon their legs, with their eyes very wide open. Their nostrils very much inflated, and the muscles of their legs and arms very strongly developed, and all their countenances expressing great surprise. All the gentlemen were very pigeon-breasted and very blue about the beards; and all the ladies were miraculous figures; and all the ladies and all the gentlemen were looking intensely nowhere, and staring with extraordinary earnestness at nothing.

When Nell had exhausted her first raptures at this glorious sight, Mrs. Jarley ordered the room to be cleared of all but herself and the child. Sitting herself down in an armchair in the center, formally invested Nell with a willow wand, long used by herself for pointing out the characters, and was at great pains to instruct her in her duty.

"That," said Mrs. Jarley, in her exhibition tone, as Nell touched a figure at the beginning of the platform, "is an unfortunate maid of honor in the time of Queen Elizabeth, who died from pricking her

finger in consequence of working upon a Sunday. Observe the blood which is trickling from her finger; also the gold-eyed needle of the period, with which she is at work."

All this Nell repeated twice or thrice—pointing to the finger and the needle at the right times; and then passed on to the next.

"That, ladies and gentlemen," said Mrs. Jarley, "is Jasper Packlemerton, of atrocious memory, who courted and married fourteen wives, and destroyed them all, by tickling the soles of their feet when they were sleeping in the consciousness of innocence and virtue. On being brought to the scaffold and asked if he was sorry for what he had done, he replied yes, he was sorry for having let 'em off so easy, and hoped all Christian husbands would pardon him the offense. Let this be a warning to all young ladies to be particular in the character of the gentlemen of their choice. Observe that his fingers are curled as if in the act of tickling, and that his face is represented with a wink, as he appeared when committing his barbarous murders."

When Nell knew all about Mr. Packlemerton, and could say it without faltering, Mrs. Jarley passed on to the fat man, and then to the thin man, the tall man, the short man, the old lady who died of dancing at a hundred thirty-two, the wild boy of the woods, the woman who poisoned fourteen families with pickled walnuts, and other historical

characters and interesting but misguided individuals. And so well did Nell profit by her instructions, and so apt was she to remember them, that by the time they had been shut up together for a couple of hours, she was in full possession of the history of the whole establishment, and perfectly competent to the enlightenment of visitors.

For some time her life and the life of the poor vacant old man passed quietly and happily.

But a heavier sorrow was to come. One night, a holiday night for them, Nell and her grandfather went out to walk. As a terrible thunderstorm was coming on, they were forced to take refuge in a small public house; and here some sinister and ill-favored men were playing cards. The old man watched them with increasing interest and excitement, until his whole appearance underwent a complete change. His face was flushed and eager, his teeth set. With a hand that trembled violently he seized Nell's little purse, and, in spite of her entreaties, joined in the game, gambling with such a savage thirst for gain that the distressed and frightened child could almost better have borne to see him dead. The night was far advanced before the play came to an end, and they were forced to remain where they were until the morning. And in the night the child was wakened from her troubled sleep to find a figure in the room—a figure busying its hands about her garments, while its face was turned to her, listening and looking lest

she should awake. It was her grandfather himself, his white face pinched and sharpened by the greediness which made his eyes unnaturally bright, counting the money of which his hands were robbing her.

Evening after evening, after that night, the old man would steal away, not to return until the night was far spent, wildly demanding money. And at last there came an hour when the child overheard him, tempted beyond his feeble powers of resistance, undertake to find more money to feed the desperate passion which had laid its hold upon his weakness by robbing Mrs. Jarley.

That night the child took her grandfather by the hand and led him forth. Through the straight streets and narrow outskirts of the town their trembling feet passed quickly; the child sustained by one idea—that they were fleeing from disgrace and crime, and that her grandfather's preservation must depend solely upon her firmness unaided by one word of advice or any helping hand—the old man following her as if she had been an angel messenger sent to lead him where she would.

The hardest part of all their wanderings was now before them. They slept in the open air that night, and on the following morning some men offered to take them a long distance on their barge. The men, though they were not unkindly, were very rugged, noisy fellows, and they drank and quarreled fearfully among themselves, to Nell's inexpressible

terror. It rained heavily, too, and she was wet and cold. At last they reached the great city whither the barge was bound, and here they wandered up and down, being now penniless, and watched the faces of those who passed, to find among them a ray of encouragement or hope. Ill in body, and sick to death at heart, the child needed her utmost firmness and resolution even to creep along.

They lay down that night, and the next night too, with nothing between them and the sky; a penny loaf was all they had had that day, and when the third morning came, it found the child much weaker, yet she made no complaint. The great manufacturing city hemmed them in on every side, and seemed to shut out hope.

Faint and spiritless as they were, its streets were insupportable. After humbly asking for relief at some few doors, and being repulsed, they agreed to make their way out of it as speedily as they could, and try whether the inmates of any lone house beyond would have more pity on their exhausted state.

They were dragging themselves along through the last street, and the child felt that the time was close at hand when her enfeebled powers would bear no more. There appeared before them, at this juncture, going in the same direction as themselves, a traveler on foot, who, with a portmanteau strapped to his back, leaned upon a stick as he walked,

and read from a book which he held in his other hand.

It was not an easy matter to come up with him and beseech his aid, for he walked fast, and was a little distance in advance. At length he stopped, to look more attentively at some passage in his book. Animated with a ray of hope, the child shot on before her grandfather, and, going close to the stranger without rousing him by the sound of her footsteps, she began, in a few faint words, to implore his help.

He turned his head. The child clapped her hands together, uttered a wild shriek and fell senseless at his feet.

It was the poor schoolmaster, no other than the poor schoolmaster. Scarcely less moved and surprised by the sight of the child than she had been on recognizing him, he stood, for a moment, silent, without even having the presence of mind to raise her from the ground.

But, quickly recovering his self-possession, he threw down his stick and book, and dropping on one knee beside her, endeavored, by such simple means as occurred to him, to restore her to herself; while her grandfather, standing by, wrung his hands, and implored her, with many endearing expressions, to speak to him, were it only a word.

"She appears to be quite exhausted," said the schoolmaster, glancing upward into his face. "You have taxed her powers too far, friend."

"She is perishing of want," rejoined the old man. "I never thought how weak and ill she was till now."

Casting a look upon him, half reproachful and half compassionate, the schoolmaster took the child in his arms, and bidding the old man gather up her little basket and follow him directly, bore her away at his utmost speed.

There was a small inn within sight, to which, it would seem, he had been directing his steps when so unexpectedly overtaken. Toward this place he hurried with his unconscious burden and, rushing into the kitchen and calling upon the company there assembled to make way, deposited it on a chair before the fire.

The company, who rose in confusion on the schoolmaster's entrance, did as people usually do under such circumstances. Everybody called for his or her favorite remedy, which nobody brought; each cried for more air, at the same time carefully excluding what air there was by closing around the object of sympathy. All wondered why somebody else didn't do what it never appeared to occur to them might be done by themselves.

The landlady, however, who possessed more readiness and activity than any one of them, and who had withal a quicker perception of the merits of the case, soon came running in, with a little hot brandy and water, followed by her servant girl, carrying vinegar, hartshorn, smelling salts, and such other restoratives; which, being duly administered, revived

the child so far as to enable her to thank them in a faint voice, and to extend her hand to the poor schoolmaster, who stood, with an anxious face, hard by. Without suffering her to speak another word, or so much as to stir a finger any more, the women straightway carried her off to bed; and, having covered her up warmly, bathed her cold feet, and wrapped them in flannel, they dispatched a messenger for the doctor.

The doctor, who was a red-nosed gentleman with a great bunch of seals dangling below a waistcoat of ribbed black satin, arrived with all speed, and taking his seat by the bedside of poor Nell, drew out his watch, and felt her pulse. Then he looked at her tongue, then he felt her pulse again, and while he did so, he eyed the half-emptied wineglass as if in profound abstraction.

"I should give her," said the doctor at length, "a teaspoonful, every now and then, of hot brandy and water."

"Why, that's exactly what we've done, sir!" said the delighted landlady.

"I should also," observed the doctor, who had passed the foot bath on the stairs, "I should also," said the doctor, in the voice of an oracle, "put her feet in hot water and wrap them up in flannel. I should likewise," said the doctor, with increased solemnity, "give her something light for supper—the wing of a roasted fowl now——"

"Why, goodness gracious me, sir, it's cooking at the kitchen fire this instant!" cried the landlady. And so, indeed, it was, for the schoolmaster had ordered it to be put down, and it was getting on so well that the doctor might have smelled it if he had tried; perhaps he did.

"You may then," said the doctor, rising gravely, "give her a glass of hot mulled port wine, if she likes wine—"

"And a toast, sir?" suggested the landlady.

"Ay," said the doctor, in the tone of a man who makes a dignified concession. "And a toast—of bread. But be very particular to make it of bread, if you please, ma'am."

With which parting injunction, slowly and portentously delivered, the doctor departed, leaving the whole house in admiration of that wisdom which tallied so closely with their own. Everybody said he was a very shrewd doctor indeed, and knew perfectly what people's constitutions were; which there appears some reason to suppose he did.

While her supper was preparing, the child fell into a refreshing sleep, from which they were obliged to rouse her when it was ready. As she evinced extraordinary uneasiness on learning that her grandfather was below stairs, and as she was greatly troubled at the thought of their being apart, he took his supper with her. Finding her still very restless on this head, they made him up a bed in an inner room,

to which he presently retired. The key of this chamber happened by good fortune to be on that side of the door which was in Nell's room; she turned it on him when the landlady had withdrawn, and crept to bed again with a thankful heart.

The schoolmaster sat for a long time smoking his pipe by the kitchen fire, which was now deserted; thinking, with a very happy face, on the fortunate chance which had brought him so opportunely to the child's assistance.

The schoolmaster, as it appeared, was on his way to a new home. And when the child had recovered somewhat from her exhaustion, it was arranged that she and her grandfather should accompany him to the village whither he was bound, and that he should endeavor to find them some humble occupation by which they could subsist.

It was a secluded village, lying among the quiet country scenes Nell loved. Near the schoolmaster's house there was an old church which people often visited because of its historic interest. Someone was needed to admit these strangers and to show them about. Little Nell was made very happy by having this charge given to her. And now, her grandfather being tranquil and at rest, her life flowed quietly along in the way she loved best. She soon had many friends in the village. People smiled to see her pass, and children gathered about her, eager for a word from her. No wonder Nell was happy after all her

trouble. But she had never been a very strong child and she had suffered many hardships in her long struggle to protect her poor grandfather. Though she had found all these good friends, they could not make her well and strong. Before very long, little Nell came to the end of her life's journey. Nor did her grandfather live long after her. And in the church where they had often lingered hand in hand, the old man and the child sleep together.

—*The Old Curiosity Shop*

TROTTY VECK AND MEG

"TROTTY" seems a strange name for an old man, but it was given to Toby Veck because of his always going at a trot to do his errands; for he was a porter, and his office was to take letters and messages for people who were in too great a hurry to send them by the post, which in those days was neither cheap nor quick. He did not earn very much, and had to be out in all weathers and all day long. But Toby was of a cheerful disposition, and looked on the bright side of everything, and was grateful for any small mercies that came in his way; and so was happier than many people who never knew what it was to be hungry or in want of comforts. His greatest joy was his dear, bright, pretty daughter Meg, who loved him dearly.

One cold day, near the end of the year, Toby had been waiting a long time for a job, trotting up and down in his usual place before the church, and trying hard to keep himself warm, when the bells chimed twelve o'clock, which made Toby think of dinner.

"There's nothing," he remarked, carefully feeling his nose to make sure it was still there, "more regular in coming round than dinner time, and nothing less regular in coming round than dinner. That's the

great difference between 'em." He went on talking to himself, trotting up and down, and never noticing who was coming near to him.

"Why, father, father," said a pleasant voice, and Toby turned to find his daughter's sweet, bright eyes close to his.

"Why, pet," said he, kissing her and squeezing her blooming face between his hands, "what's to-do? I didn't expect you today, Meg."

"Neither did I expect to come, father," said Meg, nodding and smiling. "But here I am! And not alone, not alone!"

"Why, you don't mean to say," observed Trotty, looking curiously at the covered basket she carried, "that you—"

"Smell it, father dear," said Meg. "Only smell it!"

Trotty was going to lift up the cover at once, in a great hurry, when she gaily interposed her hand.

"No, no, no," said Meg, with the glee of a child. "Lengthen it out a little. Let me just lift up the corner; just a lit-tle, ti-ny cor-ner, you know," said Meg, suiting the action to the word with the utmost gentleness, and speaking very softly, as if she were afraid of being overheard by something inside the basket. "There, now; what's that?"

Toby took the shortest possible sniff at the edge of the basket, and cried out in rapture:

"Why, it's hot," he said.

Trotty Veck takes a peep and a guess

But to Meg's great delight he could not guess what it was that smelled so good.

"Polonies? Trotters? Liver? Pettitoes? Sausages?" he tried one after the other. At last he exclaimed in triumph. "Why, what am I a'thinking of? It's tripe!"

And it was.

"And so," said Meg, "I'll lay the cloth at once, father; for I have brought the tripe in a basin, and tied the basin up in a pocket handkerchief; and if I like to be proud for once, and spread that for a cloth, and call it a cloth, there's nobody to prevent me, is there, father?"

"Not that I know of, my dear," said Toby; "but they're always a-bringing up some new law or other."

"And according to what I was reading to you in the paper the other day, father, what the judge said, you know, we poor people are supposed to know them all. Ha, ha! What a mistake! My goodness me, how clever they think us!"

"Yes, my dear," cried Trotty, "and they'd be very fond of any one of us that *did* know 'em all. He'd grow fat upon the work he'd get, that man, and be popular with the gentlefolks in his neighborhood. Very much so!"

"He'd eat his dinner with an appetite, whoever he was, if it smelled like this," said Meg, cheerfully. "Make haste, for there's a hot potato besides, and

half a pint of fresh-drawn beer in a bottle. Where will you dine, father—on the post or on the steps? How grand we are! Two places to choose from!"

"The steps today, my pet," said Trotty. "Steps in dry weather, the post in wet. There's greater conveniency in the steps at all times, because of the sitting down, but they're rheumatic in the damp."

"Then, here," said Meg, clapping her hands after a moment's bustle, "here it is all ready! And how beautiful it looks! Come, father. Come!"

And just as Toby was about to sit down to his dinner on the doorsteps of a big house close by, the chimes rang out again, and Toby took off his hat and said, "Amen."

"Amen to the bells, father?"

"They broke in like a grace, my dear," said Trotty, "they'd say a good one if they could, I'm sure. Many's the kind thing they say to me. How often have I heard them bells say, 'Toby Veck, Toby Veck, keep a good heart, Toby!' A million times? More!"

"Well, I never!" cried Meg.

"When things is very bad, then it's 'Toby Veck, Toby Veck, job coming soon, Toby!'"

"And it comes—at last, father," said Meg, with a touch of sadness in her pleasant voice.

"Always," answered Toby. "Never fails."

While this discourse was holding, Trotty made

no pause in his attack upon the savory meat before him, but cut and ate, and cut and drank, and cut and chewed, and dodged about from tripe to hot potato, and from hot potato back again to tripe, with an unctuous and unflagging relish.

But happening now to look all round the street —in case anybody should be beckoning from any door or window for a porter—his eyes in coming back again encountered Meg sitting opposite him with her arms folded, and only busy in watching his progress with a smile of happiness.

"Why, Lord forgive me!" said Trotty, dropping his knife and fork. "My dove! Meg, why didn't you tell me what a beast I was?"

"Father?"

"Sitting here," said Trotty, in penitent explanation, "cramming and stuffing and gorging myself, and you before me there, never so much as breaking your precious fast, nor wanting to, when——"

"But I have broken it, father," interposed his daughter, laughing, "all to bits. I have had my dinner."

"Nonsense," said Trotty. "Two dinners in one day! It ain't possible! You might as well tell me that two New Year's Days will come together, or that I have had a gold head all my life, and never changed it."

"I have had my dinner, father, for all that," said Meg, coming nearer to him. "And if you will

go on with yours, I'll tell you how and where, and how your dinner came to be brought, and—and something else besides."

Toby still appeared incredulous; but she looked into his face with her clear eyes, and, laying her hand upon his shoulder, motioned him to go on while the meat was hot. So Trotty took up his knife and fork again and went to work, but much more slowly than before, and shaking his head, as if he were not at all pleased with himself.

"I had my dinner, father," said Meg, after a little hesitation, "with—with Richard. His dinner time was early; and as he brought his dinner with him when he came to see me, we—we had it together, father."

Trotty took a little beer and smacked his lips. Then he said, "Oh!" because she waited.

"And Richard says, father—" Meg resumed, then stopped.

"What does Richard say, Meg?" asked Toby.

"Richard says, father—" Another stoppage.

"Richard's a long time saying it," said Toby.

"He says, then, father," Meg continued, lifting up her eyes at last, and speaking in a tremble, but quite plainly, "another year is nearly gone. Where is the use of waiting on from year to year, when it is so unlikely we shall ever be better off than we are now? He says we are poor now, father, and we shall be poor then; but we are young now, and

years will make us old before we know it. He says that if we wait, people in our condition, until we see our way quite clearly, the way will be a narrow one indeed—the common way—the grave, father."

A bolder man than Trotty Veck must needs have drawn upon his boldness largely to deny it. Trotty held his peace.

"And how hard, father, to grow old and die, and think we might have cheered and helped each other! How hard in all our lives to love each other, and to grieve, apart, to see each other working, changing, growing old and gray. Even if I got the better of it, and forgot him (which I never could), oh, father, dear, how hard to have a heart so full as mine is now, and live to have it slowly drained out every drop, without the recollection of one happy moment of a woman's life to stay behind and comfort me and make me better!"

Trotty sat quite still. Meg dried her eyes, and said more gaily, that is to say, with here a laugh and there a sob, and here a laugh and sob together:

"So Richard says, father, as his work was yesterday made certain for some time to come, and as I love him and have loved him full three years—ah, longer than that, if he knew it!—will I marry him on New Year's Day?"

Just then Richard himself came up to persuade Toby to agree to their plan and, almost at the same moment, a footman came out of the house and or-

dered them all off the steps. And some gentleman came out who called to Trotty, and asked a great many questions, and found a good deal of fault, telling Richard he was very foolish to want to get married, which made Toby feel very unhappy and Richard very angry. So the lovers went off together, sadly; Richard looking gloomy and downcast, and Meg in tears. Toby, who had a letter given him to carry, and a sixpence, trotted off in rather low spirits to a very grand house, where he was told to take the letter in to the gentleman. While waiting he heard the letter read.

It was from Alderman Cute, to tell Sir Joseph Bowley that one of his tenants named Will Fern, who had come to London to try to get work, had been brought before him charged with sleeping in a shed, and asking if Sir Joseph wished him to be dealt with leniently or otherwise. To Toby's great disappointment, for Sir Joseph had talked a great deal about being a friend to the poor, the answer was given that Will Fern might be sent to prison as a vagabond, and made an example of, though his only fault was poverty. On his way home, Toby, thinking sadly, with his hat pulled down low on his head, ran against a man dressed as a countryman, carrying a fair-haired little girl. Toby inquired anxiously if he had hurt either of them. The man answered no, and seeing Toby had a kind face, he asked him the way to Alderman Cute's house.

"It's impossible," cried Toby, "that your name is Will Fern?"

"That's my name," said the man.

Thereupon Toby told him what he had just heard, and said, "Don't go there."

Poor Will told him how he could not make a living in the country, and had come to London with his orphan niece to try to find a friend of her mother's and to endeavor to get some work, and, wishing Toby a happy New Year, was about to trudge wearily off again, when Trotty caught his hand saying:

"Stay! The New Year never can be happy to me if I see the child and you go wandering away without a shelter for your heads. Come home with me. I'm a poor man, living in a poor place; but I can give you lodging for one night, and never miss it. Come home with me! Here! I'll take her!" cried Trotty, lifting up the child. "A pretty one! I'd carry twenty times her weight and never know I'd got it. Tell me if I go too quick for you. I'm very fast. I always was!" Trotty said this taking about six of his trotting paces to one stride of his fatigued companion, and with his thin legs quivering again beneath the load he bore.

"Why, she's as light," said Trotty, trotting in his speech as well as in his gait—for he couldn't bear to be thanked, and dreaded a moment's pause—"as light as a feather. Lighter than a peacock's feather—a great deal lighter. Here we are and here we go!"

And, rushing in, he set the child down before his daughter. The little girl gave one look at Meg's sweet face and ran into her arms at once, while Trotty ran around the room saying, "Here we are and here we go! Here, Uncle Will, come to the fire. Meg, my precious darling, where's the kettle? Here it is and here it goes, and it'll bile in no time!"

"Why, father!" said Meg, as she knelt before the child and pulled off her wet shoes, "you're crazy tonight, I think. I don't know what the bells would say to that. Poor little feet, how cold they are!"

"Oh, they're warmer now!" exclaimed the child. "They're quite warm now!"

"No, no, no," said Meg. "We haven't rubbed 'em half enough. We're so busy. And when they're done we'll brush out the damp hair; and when that's done we'll bring some color to the poor, pale face with fresh water; and when that's done we'll be so gay and happy!"

The child, sobbing, clasped her round the neck, saying, "O Meg, O dear Meg!"

"Good gracious me!" said Meg presently, "father's crazy. He's put the dear child's bonnet on the kettle, and hung the lid behind the door!"

Trotty hastily repaired this mistake, and went off to find some tea and a rasher of bacon he fancied "he had seen lying somewhere on the stairs."

He soon came back and made the tea, and before long they were all enjoying a meal. Trotty and Meg

only took a morsel for form's sake, but their delight was in seeing their visitors eat, and very happy they were—though Trotty had noticed that Meg was sitting by the fire in tears when they had come in, and he feared her marriage had been broken off.

After tea Meg took Lillian to bed, and Toby showed Will Fern where he was to sleep. As he came back past Meg's door, he heard the child saying her prayers, remembering Meg's name and asking for his. Then he went to sit by the fire and read his paper, and fell asleep to have a wonderful dream, so terribly sad that it was a great relief when he woke.

"And whatever you do, father," said Meg, "don't eat tripe again without asking some doctor whether it's likely to agree with you; for how you *have* been going on! Good gracious!"

She was working with her needle at a little table by the fire, dressing her simple gown with ribbons for her wedding—so quietly happy, so blooming and youthful, so full of beautiful promise, that he flew to clasp her in his arms.

But he caught his feet in the newspaper, which had fallen on the hearth, and somebody came rushing in between them.

"No!" cried the voice of this same somebody. A generous and jolly voice it was! "Not even you; not even you. The first kiss of Meg in the New Year is mine—mine! I have been waiting outside the house this hour to hear the bells and claim it. Meg,

my precious prize, a happy year! A life of happy years, my darling wife!"

And Richard smothered her with kisses.

You never in all your life saw anything like Trotty after this; I don't care where you have lived or what you have seen; you never in your life saw anything at all approaching him! He kept running up to Meg, and squeezing her fresh face between his hands and kissing it, going from her backwards not to lose sight of it, and running up again like a figure in a magic lantern; and whatever he did, he was constantly setting himself down in his chair, and never stopping in it for one single moment, being—that's the truth—beside himself with joy.

"And tomorrow's your wedding day, my pet!" cried Trotty. "Your real, happy wedding day!"

"Today!" cried Richard, shaking hands with him. "Today. The chimes are ringing in the New Year. Hear them!"

They *were* ringing. Bless their sturdy hearts, they *were* ringing. Great bells as they were—melodious, deep-mouthed, noble bells, cast in no common metal, made by no common founder—when had they ever chimed like that before?

Trotty was backing off to that extraordinary chair again, when the child, who had been awakened by the noise, came running in, half-dressed.

"Why, here she is!" cried Trotty, catching her up. "Here's little Lillian! Ha, ha, ha! Here we are

and here we go! Oh, here we are and here we go again! And here we are and here we go! And Uncle Will, too!"

Before Will Fern could make the least reply, a band of music burst into the room, attended by a flock of neighbors, screaming, "A Happy New Year, Meg!" "A happy wedding!" "Many of 'em!" and other fragmentary good wishes of that sort. The Drum (who was a private friend of Trotty's) then stepped forward and said:

"Trotty Veck, my boy, it's got about that your daughter is going to be married tomorrow. There ain't a soul that knows you that don't wish you well, or that knows her and don't wish her well. Or that knows you both and don't wish you both all the happiness the New Year can bring. And here we are to play it in and dance it in accordingly."

Then came in Mrs. Chickenstalker, a good-humored, comely woman who, to the delight of all, turned out to be the friend of Lillian's mother, for whom Will Fern had come to look. Then the music struck up, and Trotty, making Meg and Richard second couple, led off Mrs. Chickenstalker down the dance, and danced it in a step unknown before or since, founded on his own peculiar trot.

—*Christmas Stories*

TINY TIM

IT will surprise you all very much to hear that there was once a man who did not like Christmas. In fact, he had been heard on several occasions to use the word *humbug* with regard to it. His name was Scrooge, and he was a hard, sour-tempered man of business, intent only on saving and making money, and caring nothing for anyone. He paid the poor, hard-working clerk in his office as little as he could possibly get the work done for, and lived on as little as possible himself, alone, in two dismal rooms. He was never merry or comfortable or happy, and he hated other people to be so, and that was the reason he hated Christmas, because people *will* be happy at Christmas, you know, if they possibly can, and like to have a little money to make themselves and others comfortable.

Well, it was Christmas eve, a very cold and foggy one, and Mr. Scrooge, having given his poor clerk unwilling permission to spend Christmas day at home, locked up his office and went home himself in a very bad temper, and with a cold in his head. After having taken some gruel, as he sat over a miserable fire in his dismal room, he got into bed and had some wonderful and disagreeable dreams,

to which we will leave him, while we see how Tiny Tim, the son of his poor clerk, spent Christmas day.

The name of this clerk was Bob Cratchit. He had a wife and five other children besides Tim, who was a weak and delicate little cripple, and for this reason was dearly loved by his father and the rest of the family; not but what he was a dear little boy, too, gentle and patient and loving, with a sweet face of his own, which no one could help looking at.

Whenever he could spare the time, it was Mr. Cratchit's delight to carry his little boy out on his shoulder to see the shops and the people; and to-day he had taken him to church for the first time.

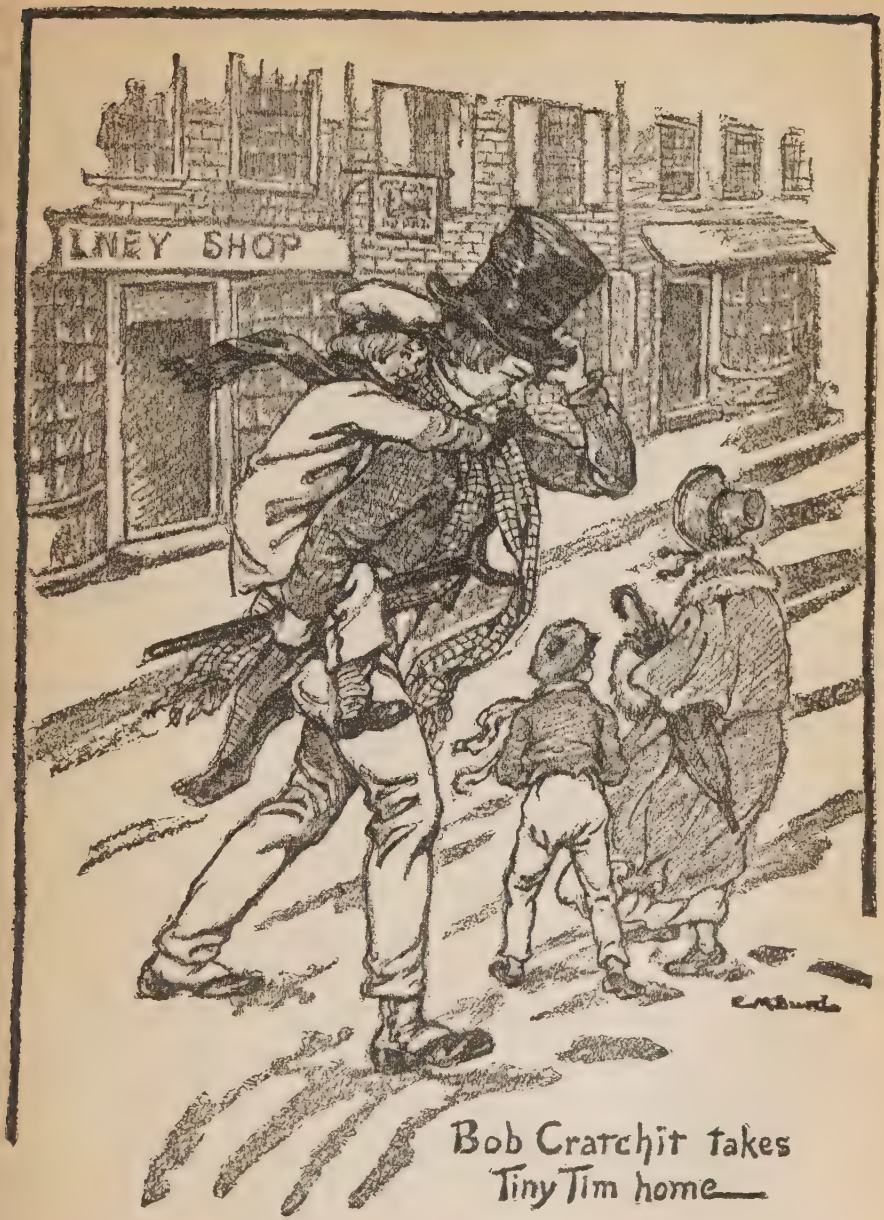
"Whatever has got your precious father and your brother Tiny Tim!" exclaimed Mrs. Cratchit. "Here's dinner all ready to be dished up. I've never known him so late on Christmas day before."

"Here he is, mother!" cried Belinda. "Here he is!" cried the other children.

In came little Bob, the father, with at least three feet of comforter, exclusive of the fringe, hanging down before him; and his threadbare clothes darned up and brushed, to look seasonable; and Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Alas for Tiny Tim, he bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame!

"Why, where's our Martha?" cried Bob Cratchit, looking round.

"Not coming," said Mrs. Cratchit.



Bob Cratchit takes
Tiny Tim home—

"Not coming!" said Bob, with a sudden declension in his high spirits; for he had been Tim's blood horse all the way from church, and had come home rampant. "Not coming upon Christmas day!"

Martha didn't like to see him disappointed, if it were only in joke; so she came out prematurely from behind the closet door, and ran into his arms, while the two young Cratchits hustled Tiny Tim, and bore him off into the wash house, that he might hear the pudding singing in the copper.

"And how did Tim behave?" asked Mrs. Cratchit.

"As good as gold and better," replied his father. "I think, wife, the child gets thoughtful, sitting at home so much. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people in church who saw he was a cripple would be pleased to remember on Christmas day who it was made the lame to walk."

"Bless his sweet heart!" said the mother in a trembling voice, and the father's voice trembled, too, as he remarked that Tiny Tim was growing strong and hearty at last.

His active little crutch was heard upon the floor, and back came Tiny Tim before another word was spoken, escorted by his brother and sister to his stool beside the fire; while Bob, Master Peter, and the two ubiquitous young Cratchits went to fetch the goose, with which they soon returned in high procession.

Such a bustle ensued that you might have thought a goose the rarest of all birds; a feathered phenomenon, to which a black swan was a matter of course—and in truth it was something very like it in that house. Mrs. Cratchit made the gravy (ready beforehand in a little saucepan) hissing hot; Master Peter mashed the potatoes with incredible vigor; Miss Belinda sweetened up the applesauce; Martha dusted the hot plates; Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner at the table; the two young Cratchits set chairs for everybody, not forgetting themselves, and, mounting guard upon their posts, crammed spoons into their mouths, lest they should shriek for goose before their turn came to be helped. At last the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless pause, as Mrs. Cratchit, looking slowly all along the carving knife, prepared to plunge it in the breast; but when she did, and when the long-expected gush of stuffing issued forth, one murmur of delight arose all round the board, and even Tiny Tim, excited by the two young Cratchits, beat on the table with the handle of his knife, and feebly cried, Hurrah!

There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavor, size and cheapness were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by applesauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family; indeed, as Mrs. Cratchit

said with great delight (surveying one small atom of a bone upon the dish,) they hadn't eaten it all, at that! Yet everyone had had enough, and the youngest Cratchits, in particular, were steeped in sage and onions to the eyebrows! But now, the plates being changed by Miss Belinda, Mrs. Cratchit left the room alone—too nervous to bear witness—to take the pudding up, and bring it in.

Suppose it should not be done enough! Suppose it should break in turning out! Suppose somebody should have gotten over the wall of the back yard and stolen it, while they were merry with the goose—a supposition at which the two young Cratchits became livid! All sorts of horrors were supposed.

Halloo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like a washing day! That was the cloth. A smell like an eating house and a pastry cook's next door to each other, with a laundress next door to that! That was the pudding! In half a minute Mrs. Cratchit entered—flushed, but smiling proudly—with the pudding like a speckled cannon ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quartern of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top.

Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly, too, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs. Cratchit since their marriage. Mrs. Cratchit said that now the weight was off her mind, she would confess she had had her

David Copperfield and Peggotty sat chatting by the parlor fire.

doubts about the quantity of flour. Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or thought it was a small pudding for a large family. It would have been flat heresy to do so. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing.

At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. The compound in the jug being tasted, and considered perfect, apples and oranges were put upon the table, and a shovel full of chestnuts on the fire. Then all the Cratchit family drew round the hearth in what Bob Cratchit called a circle, meaning half a one; and at Bob Cratchit's elbow stood the family display of glass—two tumblers and a custard cup without a handle.

These held the hot stuff from the jug, however, as well as golden goblets would have done; and Bob served it out with beaming looks, while the chestnuts on the fire sputtered and cracked noisily. Then Bob proposed:

"A merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!" Which all the family reëchoed.

"God bless us every one!" said Tiny Tim, the last of all.

Now I told you that Mr. Scrooge had some disagreeable and wonderful dreams on Christmas eve, and so he had. In one of them he dreamed that a Christmas spirit showed him his clerk's home; he saw them all gathered round the fire, and heard

them drink his health, and Tiny Tim's song, and he took special note of Tiny Tim himself.

How Mr. Scrooge spent Christmas day we do not know. He may have remained in bed, having a cold, but on Christmas night he had more dreams, in which the spirit took him again to his clerk's poor home. Seated by the table the mother was doing some needlework; a tear dropped on it now and then, and she said, poor thing, that the work, which was black, hurt her eyes. The children sat, sad and silent, about the room, except Tiny Tim, who was not there. Upstairs the father, with his face hidden in his hands, sat beside a little bed, on which lay a tiny figure, white and still. "My little child, my pretty little child," he sobbed, as the tears fell through his fingers on to the floor. "Tiny Tim died because his father was too poor to give him what was necessary to make him well; *you* kept him poor," said the dream spirit to Mr. Scrooge. The father kissed the cold, little face on the bed and went down stairs, where the sprays of holly still remained about the humble room; and taking his hat, went out, with a wistful glance at the little crutch in the corner as he shut the door. Mr. Scrooge saw all this, and many more things as strange and sad—the spirit took care of that; but, wonderful to relate, he woke the next morning feeling a different man—feeling as he had never felt in his life before.

"Why, I am as light as a feather, and as happy as an angel, and as merry as a schoolboy," he said to himself as he absolutely skipped into the next room to breakfast and threw on all the coal at once, and put two lumps of sugar in his tea. "I hope everybody had a merry Christmas, and here's a happy New Year to all the world."

Poor Bob Cratchit crept into the office a few minutes late, expecting to be roundly abused and scolded for it, but no such thing. His master was there with his back to a good fire, and actually smiling; and he shook hands with his clerk, telling him heartily that he was going to raise his salary, and asking quite affectionately after Tiny Tim! "And mind you make up a good fire in your room before you set to work, Bob," he said, as he closed his own door.

Bob could hardly believe his eyes and ears, but it was all true. Such doings as they had on New Year's day had never been seen before in the Cratchits' home, nor such a turkey as Mr. Scrooge sent them for dinner. Tiny Tim had his share, too, for Tiny Tim did not die, not a bit of it. Mr. Scrooge was a second father to him from that day; he wanted for nothing, and grew up strong and hearty. Mr. Scrooge loved him, and well he might; for was it not Tiny Tim who had unconsciously, through the Christmas dream spirit, touched his hard heart and caused him to become a good and happy man?

—A Christmas Carol

THE RUNAWAY COUPLE

SUPPOSING a young gentleman not eight years old was to run away with a fine young woman of seven, would you consider that a queer start? That there is a start as I—the boots at Holly Tree Inn—have seen with my own eyes; and I cleaned the shoes they ran away in, and they was so little that I couldn't get my hand into 'em.

"Master Harry Walmers' father, he lived at the Elms, away by Shooter's Hill, six or seven miles from London. He was uncommon proud of Master Harry, as he was his only child; but he didn't spoil him, neither. He was a gentleman that had a will of his own, and an eye of his own, and that would be minded. Consequently, though he made quite a companion of the fine bright boy, still he kept the command over him, and the child *was* a child. I was under-gardener there at that time; and one morning Master Harry, he comes to me and says:

"'Cobbs, how should you spell Norah if you was asked?' and then began cutting it in print all over the fence.

"I hadn't taken particular notice of children before that; but really it was pretty to see them two mites a-going about the place together, deep in love!

And the courage of the boy! Bless your soul, he'd have throwed off his little hat, and tucked up his little sleeves, and gone in at a lion, he would, if they had happened to meet one and she had been frightened of him. One day he stops along with her, where I was hoeing weeds in the gravel, and says—speaking up, 'Cobbs,' he says, 'I like you.' 'Do you, sir? I'm proud to hear it.' 'Yes, I do, Cobbs. Why do I like you, do you think, Cobbs?' 'Don't know, Master Harry, I am sure.' 'Because Norah likes you, Cobbs.' 'Indeed, sir? That's very gratifying.' 'Gratifying, Cobbs? It's better than millions of the brightest diamonds to be liked by Norah.' 'Certainly, sir.' 'You're going away, ain't you, Cobbs?' 'Yes, sir.' 'Would you like another situation, Cobbs?' 'Well, sir, I shouldn't object, if it was a good 'un.' 'Then, Cobbs,' says he, 'you shall be our head gardener when we are married.' And he tucks her, in her little sky-blue mantle, under his arm, and walks away.

"It was better than a picter, and equal to a play, to see them babies with their long, bright, curling hair, their sparkling eyes, and their beautiful light tread, a-rambling about the garden, deep in love. I was of opinion that the birds believed they was birds, and kept up with 'em, singing to please 'em. Sometimes they would creep under the tulip tree, and would sit there with their arms round one another's necks, and their soft cheeks touching, a-read-

ing about the prince and the dragon, and the good and bad enchanters, and the king's fair daughter. Sometimes I would hear them planning about having a house in a forest, keeping bees and a cow, and living entirely on milk and honey. Once I came upon them by the pond, and heard Master Harry say, 'Adorable Norah, kiss me, and say you love me to distraction, or I'll jump in headforemost.' And I make no question he would have done it if she hadn't complied.

"'Cobbs,' says Master Harry one evening when I was watering the flowers, 'I am going on a visit, this present midsummer, to my grandmamma's at York.'

"'Are you, indeed, sir? I hope you'll have a pleasant time. I am going into Yorkshire myself when I leave here.'

"'Are you going to your grandmamma's, Cobbs?'

"'No, sir. I haven't got such a thing.'

"'Not as a grandmamma, Cobbs?'

"'No, sir.'

"The boy looked on at the watering of the flowers for a little while and then said, 'I shall be very glad, indeed, to go, Cobbs—Norah's going.'

"'You'll be all right then, sir,' says I, 'with your beautiful sweetheart by your side.'

"'Cobbs,' returned the boy, flushing, 'I never let anybody joke about it when I can prevent them.'

"'It wasn't a joke, sir,' says I, with humility, 'wasn't so meant.'

"'I am glad of that, Cobbs, because I like you, you know, and you're going to live with us, Cobbs!'

"'Sir?'

"'What do you think my grandmamma gives me when I go down there?'

"'I couldn't so much as make a guess, sir.'

"'A Bank of England five-pound note, Cobbs.'

"'Whew!' says I, 'that's a spanking sum of money, Master Harry.'

"'A person could do a great deal with such a sum of money as that. Couldn't a person, Cobbs?'

"'I believe you, sir!'

"'Cobbs,' said the boy, 'I'll tell you a secret. At Norah's house they have been joking her about me, and pretending to laugh at our being engaged. Pretending to make game of it, Cobbs!'

"'Such, sir,' says I, 'is the depravity of human natur'.'

"The boy, looking exactly like his father, stood for a few minutes with his glowing face toward the sunset, and then departed with, 'Good night, Cobbs, I'm going in.'

"I was the boots at the Holly Tree Inn when one summer afternoon the coach drives up, and out of the coach gets these two children.

"The guard says to our governor, 'I don't quite make out these little passengers, but the young gentleman's words was that they were to be brought here.' The young gentleman gets out, hands his

lady out, gives the guard something for himself, says to our governor, 'We're to stop here tonight, please. Sitting room and two bedrooms will be required. Chops and cherry pudding for two!' and tucks her, in her little sky-blue mantle, under his arm, and walks into the house much bolder than brass.

"Judge what the amazement of that establishment was when those two tiny creatures, all alone by themselves, marched into the Angel—much more so when I, who had seen them without their seeing me, give the governor my views of the expedition they was upon. 'Cobbs,' says the governor, 'if this is so, I must set off myself to York and quiet their friends' minds. In which case you must keep your eye upon 'em, and humor 'em, till I come back. But before I take these measures, Cobbs, I should wish you to find out from themselves whether your opinions is correct.' 'Sir to you,' says I; 'that shall be done directly.'

"So I goes up stairs to the Angel, and there I finds Master Harry on an enormous sofa a-drying the eyes of Miss Norah with his pocket hankercher. Their little legs were entirely off the ground of course, and it really is not possible to express how small them children looked.

"'It's Cobbs! It's Cobbs!' cries Master Harry, and comes running to me, catching hold of my hand. Miss Norah comes running on t'other side.

and catching hold of my t'other hand, and they both jump for joy.

"'I see you a-getting out, sir,' says I. 'I thought it was you. I thought I couldn't be mistaken in your height and figure. What's the object of your journey, sir?—matrimonial?'

"'We are going to be married, Cobbs, at Gretna Green,' returned the boy. 'We have run away on purpose. Norah has been in rather low spirits, Cobbs; but she'll be happy, now we have found you to be our friend.'

"'Thank you, sir, and thank *you*, miss,' says I, 'for your good opinion. *Did* you bring any luggage with you, sir?'

"If you will believe me when I give you my word and honor upon it, the lady had got a parasol, a smelling bottle, a round and a half of cold buttered toast, eight peppermint drops, and a hair brush seemingly a doll's. The gentleman had got about half a dozen yards of string, a knife, three or four sheets of writing paper folded up surprisingly small, an orange, and a Chaney mug with his name upon it.

"'What may be the exact natur' of your plans, sir?' says I.

"'To go on,' replied the boy—the courage of that boy was something wonderful!—'in the morning, and be married tomorrow.'

"'Just so, sir,' says I. 'Would it meet your views, sir, if I was to accompany you?'

"When I said this, they both jumped for joy again, and cried out, 'Oh, yes, yes, Cobbs! Yes!'

"'Well, sir,' says I. 'If you will excuse my having the freedom to give an opinion, what I should recommend would be this. I'm acquainted with a pony, sir, which, put in a phaeton that I could borrow, would take you and Mrs. Harry Walmers, Jr. (myself driving, if you approve) to the end of your journey in a very short space of time. I am not altogether sure, sir, that this pony will be at liberty tomorrow, but even if you had to wait over tomorrow for him it might be worth your while. As to the small account here, sir, in case you was to find yourself running at all short, that don't signify, because I'm a part proprietor of this inn, and it could stand over.'

"I assure you that when they clapped their hands and jumped for joy again, and called me 'Good Cobbs!' and 'Dear Cobbs!' and bent across me to kiss one another in the delight of their confiding hearts, I felt myself the meanest rascal for deceiving 'em that ever was born.

"'Is there anything you want just at present, sir?' says I, mortally ashamed of myself.

"'We would like some cakes after dinner,' answered Master Harry, folding his arms, putting out one leg, and looking straight at me, 'and two apples, and jam. With dinner, we should like to have toast and water. But Norah has always been accus-

tomed to half a glass of currant wine at dessert. And so have I.'

"'It shall be ordered at the bar, sir,' says I; and away I went.

"The way in which the women of that house, without exception, every one of 'em—married and single—took to that boy when they heard the story, I consider surprising. It was as much as I could do to keep 'em from dashing into the room and kissing him. They climbed up all sorts of places, at the risk of their lives, to look at him through a pane of glass. They were seven deep at the keyhole. They were out of their minds about him and his bold spirit.

"In the evening I went into the room, to see how the runaway couple was getting on. The gentleman was on the window seat, supporting the lady in his arms. She had tears upon her face, and was lying, very tired and half asleep, with her head upon his shoulder.

"'Mrs. Harry Walmers, Jr., fatigued, sir?' says I.

"'Yes, she is tired, Cobbs; but she is not used to being away from home, and she has been in low spirits again. Cobbs, do you think you could bring a biffin, please?'

"'I ask your pardon, sir,' says I. 'What was it you——'

"'I think a Norfolk biffin would rouse her, Cobbs. She is very fond of them.'

"I withdrew in search of the required restorative, and, when I brought it in, the gentleman handed it to the lady, and fed her with a spoon, and took a little himself. The lady being heavy with sleep, and rather cross, 'What should you think, sir,' says I, 'of a chamber candlestick?' The gentleman approved; the chambermaid went first, up the great staircase; the lady, in her sky-blue mantle, followed, gallantly escorted by the gentleman; the gentleman embraced her at the door, and retired to his own apartment, where I softly locked him up.

"I couldn't but feel what a base deceiver I was when they asked me at breakfast (they had ordered sweet milk and water, and toast and currant jelly, overnight) about the pony. It really was as much as I could do, to look them two young things in the face, and think how wicked I had grown up to be. Howsomever, I went on a-lying like a Trojan, about the pony. I told 'em it did so unfortunately happen that the pony was half clipped, you see, and that he couldn't be taken out in that state for fear that it should strike to his inside, but that he'd be finished clipping in the course of the day, and that tomorrow morning at eight o'clock the phaeton would be ready. My view of the whole case, looking back upon it, is that Mrs. Harry Walmers, Jr., was beginning to give in. She hadn't had her hair curled when she went to bed, and she didn't seem quite up to brushing it herself, and its getting in

her eyes put her out. But nothing put out Master Harry. He sat behind his breakfast cup, a-tearing away at the jelly, as if he had been his own father.

"After breakfast they drawed soldiers—at least, I know that many such was found in the fireplace, all on horseback. In the course of the morning Master Harry rang the bell—it was surprising how that there boy did carry on—and said in a sprightly way, 'Cobbs, is there any good walks in this neighborhood?'

"'Yes, sir,' says I. 'There's Love Lane.'

"'Get out with you, Cobbs!'—that was that there boy's expression—'you're joking.'

"'Begging your pardon, sir,' says I, 'there really is Love Lane. And a pleasant walk it is, and proud I shall be to show it to yourself and Mrs. Harry Walmers, Jr.'

"'Norah, dear', said Master Harry, 'this is curious. We really ought to see Love Lane. Put on your bonnet, my sweetest darling, and we will go there with Cobbs.'

"I leave you to judge what a beast I felt myself to be, when that young pair told me, as we all three jogged along together, that they had made up their minds to give me two thousand guineas a year as head gardener, on account of my being so true a friend to 'em. I could have wished at the moment that the earth would have opened and swallowed me up; I felt so mean with their beaming eyes a-look-

ing at me, and believing me. Well, sir, I turned the conversation as well as I could, and took 'em down Love Lane to the water meadows, and there Master Harry would have drowned himself in half a moment more, a-getting out a water lily for her—but nothing daunted that boy. Well, sir, they was tired out. All being so new and strange to 'em, they was tired as tired could be. And they lay down on a bank of daisies, like the children in the wood, leastways meadows, and fell asleep.

"Well, sir, they woke up at last, and then one thing was getting pretty clear to me, namely, that Mrs. Harry Walmers, Jr.'s temper was on the move. When Master Harry took her round the waist she said he 'teased her so,' and when he says, 'Norah, my young May Moon, your Harry tease you?' she tells him, 'Yes; and I want to go home!'

"However, Master Harry he kept up, and his noble heart was as fond as ever. Mrs. Walmers turned very sleepy about dusk and began to cry. Therefore, Mrs. Walmers went off to bed as per yesterday; and Master Harry ditto repeated.

"About eleven or twelve at night comes back the governor in a chaise, along with Mr. Walmers and an elderly lady. Mr. Walmers looks amused and very serious, both at once, and says to our missis, 'We are very much indebted to you, ma'am, for your kind care of our little children, which we can never sufficiently acknowledge. Pray, ma'am, where is my

They lay down on a bank of daisies, like the children in the wood, and fell asleep—

boy?' Our missis says, 'Cobbs has the dear children in charge, sir. Cobbs, show forty!' Then he says to me, 'Ah, Cobbs! I am glad to see *you*. I understood you was here.' And I says, 'Yes, sir, your most obedient, sir.'

"You may be surprised to hear me say it, perhaps, but I assure you that my heart beat like a hammer, going upstairs. 'I beg your pardon, sir,' says I, while unlocking the door, 'I hope you are not angry with Master Harry. For Master Harry is a fine boy, sir, and will do you credit and honor.' And if the fine boy's father had contradicted me in the daring state of mind in which I then was, I think I should have 'fetched him a crack,' and taken the consequences.

"But Mr. Walmers only says, 'No, Cobbs. No, my good fellow. Thank you.' And the door being open, goes in.

"I go in, too, holding the light, and I see Mr. Walmers go up to the bedside, bend gently down, and kiss the little sleeping face. Then he stands looking at it for a minute, looking wonderfully like it; and then he gently shakes the little shoulder.

"'Harry, my dear boy! Harry!'

"Master Harry starts up and looks at him. Looks at me, too. Such is the honor of that mite that he looks at me to see whether he has brought me into trouble.

"'I am not angry, my child. I only want you to dress yourself and come home.'

"'Yes, Pa.'

"Master Harry dresses himself quickly. His breast begins to swell when he has nearly finished, and it swells more and more as he stands a-looking at his father; his father standing a-looking at him, the quiet image of him.

"'Please may I'—the spirit of that little creatur', and the way he kept his rising tears down—'Please, dear Pa—may I—kiss Norah before I go?'

"'You may, my child.'

"So he takes Master Harry in his hand, and I lead the way with the candle, and they come to that other bedroom, where the elderly lady is seated by the bed, and poor little Mrs. Harry Walmers, Jr., is fast asleep. There the father lifts the child up to the pillow. He lays his little face down for an instant by the little warm face of poor unconscious little Mrs. Harry Walmers, Jr., and gently draws it to him—a sight so touching to the chambermaids who are peeping through the door that one of them calls out, 'It's a shame to part 'em!' But this chambermaid was always a soft-hearted one. Not that there was any harm in that girl. Far from it."

—*Christmas Stories*

POOR JO!

JO was a crossing sweeper; his crossing was in Holborn, and there every day he swept up the mud, and begged for pennies from the people who passed. Poor Jo wasn't at all pleasant to look at. He wasn't pretty, and he wasn't clean. His clothes were only a few poor rags that hardly protected him from the cold and the rain. He had never been to school, and he could neither write nor read—could not even spell his own name. He had only one name, Jo, and that served him for Christian and surname too.

Poor Jo! He was ugly, dirty, and ignorant; but he knew one thing, that it was wicked to tell a lie, and knowing this, he always told the truth. One other thing poor Jo knew too well, and that was what being hungry means. Little Jo was very poor. He lived in Tom-all-Alones, one of the most horrible places in all London. The road here is thick with mud. The crazy houses are dropping away; two of them, Jo remembered, once fell to pieces. The air one breathes here is full of fever. The people who live in this dreadful den are the poorest of London's poor, all miserably clad, all dirty, all very hungry. They know and like Jo, for he is always

willing to go on errands for them, and does them many little acts of kindness. Not that they speak of him as Jo.

Oh, dear no! No one in Tom-all-Alones is spoken of by his name, whether it be his surname, or that which his godfathers and godmothers, always supposing that he had any, gave him. The ladies and gentlemen who live in this unfashionable neighborhood have their fashions just as much as the great folks who live in the grand mansions in the West End. Here one of the prevailing customs is to give everyone a nickname. Thus it is that if you inquired there for a boy named Jo you would be asked whether you meant Carrots, or the Colonel, or Gallows, or young Chisel, or Terrier Tip, or Lankey, the Brick.

Jo was generally called Toughy, although a few superior persons who gave themselves airs and graces, and affected a dignified style of speaking, called him "the tough subject."

Jo used to say he had never had but one friend.

One cold, winter night, when he was shivering in a doorway near his crossing, a dark-haired, rough-bearded man turned to look at him, and then came back and began to talk to him.

"Have you a friend, boy?" he asked presently.

"No, never 'ad none."

"Neither have I. Not one. Take this, and good night," and so saying the man, who looked

very poor and shabby, put into Jo's hand the price of a supper and a night's lodging.

Often afterwards the stranger would stop to talk with Jo, and give him money whenever he had any to give. When he had none he would merely say, "I am as poor as you are today, Jo," and pass on.

One day Jo was fetched away from his crossing by the Beadle, and taken by him to the Sol's Arms, a public house in a little court near Chancery Lane, where the Coroner was holding an inquest—an "inkwich" Jo called it.

"Did the boy know the deceased?" asked the Coroner.

Indeed Jo had known him; it was his only friend who was dead.

"He was very good to me, he was," was all poor Jo could say.

The next day they buried the dead man in the churchyard hard by; a churchyard hemmed in by houses on either side, and separated by an iron gate from the wretched court through which one goes to it.

But that night there came a slouching figure through the court to the iron gate. It held the gate with both hands and looked between the bars—stood looking in for a little while, then with an old broom it softly swept the step and made the archway clean. It was poor Jo; and as, after one more long look through the bars of the gate, he went

Poor Jo looks through the iron railing at his friend's grave—

away he softly said to himself, "He was very good to me, he was."

Now, there happened to be at the inquest a kind-hearted little man named Snagsby, who was a stationer by trade, and he pitied Jo so much that he gave him half a crown. Half a crown was Mr. Snagsby's one remedy for all the troubles of this world.

Jo was very sad after the death of his one friend, the more so as his friend had died in great poverty and misery, with no one near him to care whether he lived or not.

It was a few days after the funeral, while Jo was still living on Mr. Snagsby's half crown, half a bill, Jo called it, that a much bigger slice of good luck fell to his share. He was standing at his crossing as the day closed in, when a lady closely veiled and plainly dressed came up to him.

"Are you the boy Jo who was examined at the inquest?" she asked.

"That's me," said Jo.

"Come farther up the court. I want to speak to you."

"Wot, about him as was dead? Did you know him?"

"How dare you ask me if I knew him!"

"No offense, my lady," said Jo humbly.

"Listen and hold your tongue. Show me the place where he lived, then where he died, then where

they buried him. Go in front of me, don't look back once, and I'll pay you well."

"I'm fly," said Jo. "But no larks, yer know. Stow hooking it."

Jo takes her to each of the places she wants to see, and he notices that when he shows her the burying place she shrinks into a dark corner as if to hide herself while she looks at the spot where the dead man's body rests. Then she draws off her glove, and Jo sees that she has sparkling rings on her fingers. She drops a coin into his hand and is gone. Jo holds the coin to the light and sees to his joy that it is a golden sovereign. He bites it to make sure that it is genuine, and being satisfied that it has successfully stood the test, he puts it under his tongue for safety, and goes off to Tom-all-Alones.

But people in Jo's position in life find it hard to change a sovereign, for who will believe that they can come by it honestly? So poor little Jo didn't get much of the sovereign for himself; for, as he afterwards told Mr. Snagsby:

"I had to pay five bob down in Tom-all-Alones before they'd square it for to give me change, and then a young man he thieved another five while I was asleep, and a boy he thieved ninepence, and the landlord he stood drains round with a lot more of it."

And so Jo was left alone in the world again, now that his friend was dead. And this poor friend had

only two mourners, Jo, the crossing sweeper, and the lady who had come to look at his grave.

Jo mourned for him because he had been his only friend, and the lady mourned for the poor man because she had loved him dearly many years ago when they had both been young together.

As time went on, Jo's troubles began in earnest. The police turned him away from his crossing, and wherever they met him they ordered him to "move on." It was hard, very hard on poor Jo; for he knew no way of getting a living except at his crossing. He went back to it as often as he dared, until the police turned him away again. Once a policeman, angry to find that Jo hadn't moved on, seized him by the arm and dragged him down to Mr. Snagsby's.

"What's the matter, constable?" asked Mr. Snagsby.

"This boy's as obstinate a young gonoph as I know; although repeatedly told to, he won't move on."

"I'm always a-moving on," cried Jo. "Oh, my eye, where am I to move to?"

"My instructions don't go to that," the constable answered, "my instructions are that you're to keep moving on. Now the simple question is, sir," turning to Mr. Snagsby, "whether you know him. He says you do."

"Yes, I know him."

"Very well, I leave him here; but mind you keep moving on."

The constable then moved on himself, leaving Jo at Mr. Snagsby's. There was a little tea party there that evening, and Mr. Snagsby filled Jo's hands with the remains of the little feast they had had.

And now Jo began to find life rougher and harder than ever. He lost his crossing altogether, and spent day after day in moving on. He grew hungrier and thinner, and at last the foul air of Tom-all-Alones began to have an ill-effect even on him—"the tough subject." His throat grew very dry, his cheeks were burning hot, and his poor little head ached till the pain made him cry. Then he remembered a poor woman he had once done a kindness to, a brickmaker's wife, who had told him she lived at St. Albans, and that a lady there had been very good to her. "Perhaps she'll be good to me," thought Jo, and he started off to go to St. Albans.

So it came about that one Saturday night Jo reached that town very tired and very ill. Happily for him the brickmaker's wife met him and took him into her cottage. While he was resting there a lady came in.

The lady sat down by the bed, and asked him very kindly what was the matter.

"I'm a-being froze and then burnt up, and then froze and burnt up again ever so many times over in an hour. And my head's all sleepy, and all a-going

round like, and I'm so dry, and my bones is nothing half so much bones as pain."

"Where are you going?"

"Somewheres," replied Jo, "I'm a-being moved on, I am."

"Well, tonight you must come with me, and I'll make you comfortable." So Jo went with the lady to a great house not far off, and there in a nice warm loft they made a bed for him, and brought him tempting wholesome food. Everyone was very kind to him, even the servants called him "Old Chap," and told him he would soon be well. Jo was really happy, and for a time forgot his pain and fever. But something frightened Jo, and he felt he could not stay there, and he ran out into the cold night air. Where he went he could never remember, for when he next came to his senses he found himself in a hospital. He stayed there for some weeks and was then discharged, though still weak and ill. He was very thin, and when he drew a breath his chest was very painful. "It draws," said Jo, "as heavy as a cart." Now a certain young doctor by the name of Allan Woodcourt takes a stroll through Tom-all-Alones one morning. The banks of a stagnant channel of mud is the main street of Tom-all-Alones; nothing is to be seen but the crazy houses, shut up and silent. Tom-all-Alones is still asleep and nothing is astir.

Yes, something is! He sees a ragged figure coming very carefully along, crouching close to the soiled

walls—which the wretchedest figure might as well avoid—and thrusting a hand before it. It is the figure of a boy, whose face is hollow, and whose eyes have an emaciated glare. He is so intent on getting along unseen that even the appearance of a stranger in whole garments does not tempt him to look back. He shades his face with his ragged elbow as he passes on the other side of the way, and goes shrinking and creeping on, with his anxious hand before him, and his shapeless clothes hanging in shreds. Clothes made for what purpose, or of what material, it would be impossible to say. They look, in color and in substance, like a bundle of rank leaves of swampy growth that rotted long ago.

Allan Woodcourt pauses to look after him and note all this. He walks on thinking about the child and soon, overtaking him, stops to talk to him. Jo has known so little kindness in his forlorn life and is so ill that he can scarcely answer the good doctor, but presently Jo takes courage and he looks at the friendly face and hears the quiet voice, and is quite ready to follow Allan Woodcourt.

Jo was taken to a clean little room, and bathed, and had clean clothes, and good food, and kind people about him once more, but he was too ill now, far too ill, for anything to do him any good.

"Let me lie here quiet," said poor Jo, "and be so kind anyone as is passin' nigh where I used to

sweep, as to say to Mr. Snagsby as Jo, wot he knew once, is a-moving on."

One day the young doctor was sitting by him, when suddenly Jo made a strong effort to get out of bed.

"Well, Jo, what is the matter? Don't be frightened."

"I thought," says Jo, who has started and is looking round, "I thought I was in Tom-all-Alones again. An't there nobody here but you, Mr. Woodcourt?"

"Nobody."

"And I an't took back to Tom-all-Alones. Am I, sir?"

"No."

Jo closes his eyes, muttering, "I'm wery thankful."

After watching him closely a little while, Allan puts his mouth very near his ear, and says to him in a low, distinct voice:

"Jo! Did you ever know a prayer?"

"Never know'd nothink, sir."

"Not so much as one short prayer?"

"No, sir. Nothink at all. Mr. Chadbands he wos a-prayin' wunst at Mr. Snagsby's and I heerd him, but he sounded as if he was a-speakin' to hisself, and not to me. He prayed a lot, but *I* couldn't make out nothink on it. *I* never know'd what it wos all about."

It takes him a long time to say this; and few but an experienced and attentive listener could hear or, hearing, understand him. After a short relapse into sleep or stupor, he makes, of a sudden, a strong effort to get out of bed.

"Stay, Jo, stay! What now?"

"It's time for me to go to that there berryin' ground, sir," he returns with a wild look.

"Lie down, and tell me. What burying ground, Jo?"

"Where they laid him as wos wery good to me, wery good to me indeed, he wos. It's time for me to go down to that there berryin' ground, sir, and ask to be put along with him. I wants to go there and be berried. He used fur to say to me, 'I am as poor as you today, Jo,' he ses. I wants to tell him that I am as poor as him now, and have come there to be laid along with him."

"By and by, Jo. By and by."

"Ah! P'r'aps they wouldn't do it if I wos to go myself. But will you promise to have me took there, sir, and laid along with him?"

"I will, indeed."

"Thank'ee, sir. Thank'ee, sir! They'll have to get the key of the gate afore they can take me in, for it's allus locked. And there's a step there, as I used fur to clean with my broom. It's turned wery dark, sir. Is there any light a-comin'?"

"It is coming fast, Jo.

Fast. The cart is shaken all to pieces, and the rugged road is very near its end.

"Jo, my poor fellow!"

"I hear you, sir, in the dark, but I'm a-gropin'—a-gropin'—let me catch hold of your hand."

"Jo, can you say what I say?"

"I'll say anythink as you say, sir, for I knows it's good."

"OUR FATHER."

"Our Father!—yes, that's wery good, sir!"

"WHICH ART IN HEAVEN."

"Art in Heaven—is the light a-comin, sir?"

"It is close at hand. HALLOWED BE THY NAME."

"Hallowed be—Thy—name!"

The light is come upon the dark, benighted way. Dead!

Dead, your majesty. Dead, my lords and gentlemen. Dead, Right Reverends and Wrong Reverends of every order. Dead, men and women born with heavenly compassion in your hearts. And dying thus around us every day!

—*Bleak House*

THE TOY MAKER AND HIS BLIND DAUGHTER

CALEB PLUMMER and his blind daughter lived alone in a little cracked nutshell of a house. They were toy makers, and their house, which was so small that it might have been knocked to pieces with a hammer and carried away in a cart, was stuck like a toadstool on to the premises of Messrs. Gruff & Tackleton, the toy merchants for whom they worked—the latter of whom was himself both Gruff and Tackleton in one.

I am saying that Caleb and his blind daughter lived here. I should say Caleb did; his daughter lived in an enchanted palace, which her father's love had created for her. She did not know that the ceilings were cracked, the plaster tumbling down, and the woodwork rotten; that everything was old and ugly and poverty-stricken about her, and that her father was a gray-haired, stooping old man, and the master for whom they worked a hard and brutal taskmaster. Oh, dear no, she fancied a pretty, cosy, compact little home full of tokens of a kind master's care, a smart, brisk, gallant-looking father, and a handsome and noble-looking toy merchant who was an angel of goodness.

This was all Caleb's doing. When his blind daughter was a baby he had determined, in his great love and pity for her, that her deprivation should be turned into a blessing, and her life as happy as he could make it. And she was happy; everything about her she saw with her father's eyes, in the rainbow-colored light with which it was his care and pleasure to invest it.

Caleb and his daughter were at work together in their usual working room, which served them for their ordinary living room as well; and a strange place it was. There were houses in it, finished and unfinished, for dolls of all stations in life. Suburban tenements for dolls of moderate means; kitchens and single apartments for dolls of the lower classes; capital town residences for dolls of high estate. Some of these establishments were already furnished according to estimate, with a view to the convenience of dolls of limited income; others could be fitted on the most expensive scale, at a moment's notice, from whole shelves of chairs and tables, sofas, bedsteads, and upholstery. The nobility and gentry and public in general, for whose accommodation these tenements were designed, lay here and there in baskets, staring straight up at the ceiling; but in signifying their degrees in society, and confining them to their respective stations (which experience shows to be lamentably difficult in real life), the makers of these dolls had far improved on nature, who is often

froward and perverse. They, not resting on such arbitrary marks as satin, cotton print, and bits of rag, had superadded striking personal differences which allowed of no mistake. Thus, the doll lady of distinction had wax limbs of perfect symmetry; but only she and her compeers, the next grade in the social scale being made of leather; and the next coarse linen stuff. As to the common people, they had just so many matches out of tinder boxes for their arms and legs, and there they were, established in their sphere at once, beyond the possibility of getting out of it.

There were various other samples of his handicraft besides dolls in Caleb Plummer's room. There were Noah's Arks, in which the birds and beasts were an uncommonly tight fit, I assure you; though they could be crammed in, anyhow, at the roof, and rattled and shaken into the smallest compass. By a bold poetical license, most of these Noah's Arks had knockers on the doors; inconsistent appendages, perhaps, as suggestive of morning callers and a postman, yet a pleasant finish to the outside of the building. There were scores of melancholy little carts, which, when the wheels went round, performed most doleful music, many small fiddles, drums, and other instruments of torture; no end of cannon, shields, swords, spears, and guns. There were little tumblers in red breeches, incessantly swarming up high obstacles of red tape, and coming down, head-

first, upon the other side; and there were innumerable old gentlemen of respectable, not to say venerable, appearance, insanely flying over horizontal pegs, inserted, for the purpose, in their own street doors. There were beasts of all sorts, horses in particular, of every breed, from the spotted barrel on four legs, with a small tippet for a mane, to the thoroughbred rocker on his highest mettle.

"You were out in the rain last night in your beautiful new greatcoat," said Bertha.

"Yes, in my beautiful new greatcoat," answered Caleb, glancing to where a roughly made garment of sackcloth was hung up to dry.

"How glad I am you bought it, father."

"And from such a tailor! quite a fashionable tailor; a bright blue cloth, with bright buttons; it's a deal too good a coat for me."

"Too good!" cried the blind girl, stopping to laugh and clap her hands, "as if anything was too good for my handsome father, with his smiling face, and black hair, and his straight figure; as if *any* thing could be too good for my handsome father!"

"I'm half ashamed to wear it, though," said Caleb, watching the effect of what he said upon her brightening face, "upon my word. When I hear the boys and people say behind me, 'Halloa! Here's a swell!' I don't know which way to look. And when the beggar wouldn't go away last night; and, when

I said I was a very common man, said, 'No, your honor! Bless your honor, don't say that!' I was quite ashamed. I really felt as if I hadn't a right to wear it."

Happy blind girl! How merry she was in her exultation!

"I see you, father," she said, clasping her hands, "as plainly as if I had the eyes I never want when you are with me. A blue coat——"

"Bright blue," said Caleb.

"Yes, yes! Bright blue!" exclaimed the girl, turning up her radiant face, "the color I can just remember in the blessed sky! You told me it was blue before. A bright blue coat——"

"Made loose to the figure," suggested Caleb.

"Yes! loose to the figure!" cried the blind girl, laughing heartily, "and in it you, dear father, with your merry eye, your smiling face, your free step, and your dark hair; looking so young and handsome!"

"Halloa! Halloa!" said Caleb, "I shall be vain presently."

"I think you are already," cried the blind girl, pointing at him, in her glee. "I know you, father! Ha, ha, ha! I've found you out, you see!"

How different the picture in her mind from Caleb, as he sat observing her! She had spoken of his free step. She was right in that. For years and years he never once had crossed that threshold at his own

slow pace, but with a footfall counterfeited for her ear, and never had he, when his heart was heaviest, forgotten the light tread that was to render hers so cheerful and courageous.

"There we are," said Caleb, falling back a pace or two to form the better judgment of his work, "as near the real thing as sixpen'orth of halfpence is to sixpence. What a pity that the whole front of the house opens at once! If there was only a staircase in it now, and regular doors to the rooms to go in at! but that's the worst of my calling. I'm always deluding myself, and swindling myself."

"You are speaking quite softly. You are not tired, father?"

"Tired," echoed Caleb, with a great burst of animation, "what should tire me, Bertha? *I* was never tired. What does it mean?"

To give the greater force to his words, he stopped himself in an imitation of two small stretching and yawning figures on the mantelshelf, who were represented as in one eternal state of weariness from the waist upwards, and hummed a bit of a song. It was a drinking song, something about a sparkling bowl; and he sang it with an air of a devil-may-care voice, that made his face a thousand times more meager and more thoughtful than ever.

"What! you don't mean to say you're singing, do you?" said Tackleton, putting his head in at the door. "Go it! *I* can't sing."

Nobody would have suspected him of it. He hadn't what is generally termed a singing face, by any means.

"I can't afford to sing," said Tackleton. "I'm glad you can. I hope you can afford to work, too. Hardly time for both, I should think."

"If you could only see him, Bertha, how he's winking at me!" whispered Caleb. "Such a man to joke! You'd think, if you didn't know him, he was in earnest, wouldn't you now?"

The blind girl smiled and nodded.

"I am thanking you for the little tree, the beautiful little tree," replied Bertha, bringing forward a tiny rose tree in blossom, which, by an innocent deception, Caleb had made her believe was her master's gift, though he himself had gone without a meal or two to buy it.

"The bird that can sing and won't sing must be made to sing, they say," grumbled Tackleton. "What about the owl that can't sing, and oughtn't to sing, and will sing; is there anything that he should be made to do?"

"The extent to which he's winking at this moment!" whispered Caleb to his daughter. "Oh, my gracious!"

"Always merry and light-hearted with us!" cried the smiling Bertha.

"Oh! you're there, are you?" answered Tackleton. "Poor idiot!"

He really did believe she was an idiot; and he founded the belief, I can't say whether consciously or not, upon her being fond of him.

"Well! and being there—how are you?" said Tackleton, in his grudging way.

"Oh! well; quite well. And as happy as even you can wish me to be. As happy as you would make the whole world, if you could!"

"Poor idiot!" muttered Tackleton. "No gleam of reason! Not a gleam."

The blind girl took his hand and kissed it; held it for a moment in her own two hands; and laid her cheek against it tenderly, before releasing it. There was such unspeakable affection and such fervent gratitude in the act, that Tackleton himself was moved to say, in a milder growl than usual:

"What's the matter now?"

"Bertha," said Tackleton, assuming, for once, a little cordiality. "Come here!"

"Oh! I can come straight to you. You needn't guide me," she rejoined.

"Shall I tell you a secret, Bertha?"

"If you will," she answered, eagerly.

How bright the darkened face! How adorned with light the listening head!

"This is the day on which little what's-her-name, the spoiled child, Peerybingle's wife, pays her regular visit to you, ain't it?" said Tackleton, with a strong expression of distaste for the whole concern.

"Yes," replied Bertha. "This is the day."

"I thought so," said Tackleton. "I should like to join the party."

"Do you hear that, father?" cried the blind girl in an ecstasy.

"Yes, yes, I hear it," murmured Caleb, with the fixed look of a sleepwalker, "but I do not believe it. It's one of my lies, I've no doubt."

"You see I—I want to bring the Peerybingles a little more into company with May Fielding," said Tackleton. "I am going to be married to May."

"Married!" cried the blind girl, starting from him.

"She's such a confounded idiot," muttered Tackleton, "that I was afraid she'd never comprehend me. Yes, Bertha, married. Church, parson, clerk, beadle, glass coach, bells, breakfast, bride cake, favors, marrowbones, cleavers, and all the rest of the tomfoolery. A wedding, you know; a wedding. Don't you know what a wedding is?"

"I know," replied the blind girl, in a gentle tone. "I understand."

"Do you?" muttered Tackleton. "It's more than I expected. Well, on that account I want to join the party, and to bring May and her mother. I'll send a little something or other, before the afternoon. A cold leg of mutton, or some comfortable trifle of that sort. You'll expect me?"

"Yes," she answered.

She had drooped her head, and turned away; and so stood, with her hands crossed, musing.

"I don't think you will," muttered Tackleton, looking at her, "for you seem to have forgotten all about it already. Caleb!"

"I may venture to say I'm here, I suppose," thought Caleb. "Sir?"

"Take care she don't forget what I've been saying to her."

"*She* never forgets," returned Caleb. "It's one of the few things she ain't clever in."

"Every man thinks his own geese swans," observed the toy merchant, with a shrug. "Poor devil!"

Having delivered himself of which remark with infinite contempt, old Gruff & Tackleton withdrew.

Bertha remained where he had left her, lost in meditation. The gaiety had vanished from her downcast face, and it was very sad. Three or four times she shook her head, as if bewailing some remembrance or some loss; but her sorrowful reflections found no vent in words.

"Father, I am lonely in the dark. I want my eyes; my patient, willing eyes."

"Here they are," said Caleb. "Always ready. They are more yours than mine, Bertha, any hour in the four-and-twenty. What will your eyes do for you, dear?"

"Look round the room, father."

"All right," said Caleb. "No sooner said than done, Bertha."

"Tell me about it."

"It's much the same as usual," said Caleb. "Homely, but very snug. The gay colors on the walls; the bright flowers on the plates and dishes; the shining wood, where there are beams or panels; the general cheerfulness and neatness of the building, make it very pretty."

Cheerful and neat it was, wherever Bertha's hands could busy themselves. But nowhere else was cheerfulness possible, in the old crazy shed which Caleb's fancy so transformed.

"You have your working dress on, and are not so gallant as when you wear the handsome coat," said Bertha, touching him.

"Not quite so gallant," answered Caleb. "Pretty brisk, though."

"Father," said the blind girl, drawing close to his side and stealing one arm round his neck, "tell me something about May. She is very fair?"

"She is, indeed," said Caleb. And she was indeed. It was quite a rare thing to Caleb not to have to draw on his invention.

"Her hair is dark," said Bertha, pensively, "darker than mine. Her voice is sweet and musical, I know. I have often loved to hear it. Her shape——"

"There's not a doll's in all the room to equal it," said Caleb. "And her eyes——"

He stopped; for Bertha had drawn closer round his neck; and, from the arm that clung about him, came a warning pressure which he understood too well.

He coughed a moment, hammered for a moment, and then fell back upon the song about the sparkling bowl, his infallible resource in all such difficulties.

"Our friend, father; our benefactor. I am never tired, you know, of hearing about him. Now was I, ever?" she said, hastily.

"Of course not," answered Caleb. "And with reason."

"Ah! with how much reason?" cried the blind girl, with such fervency that Caleb, though his motives were pure, could not endure to meet her face, but dropped his eyes, as if she could have read in them his innocent deceit.

"Then tell me again about him, dear father," said Bertha. "Many times again. His face is benevolent, kind, and tender. Honest and true, I am sure it is. The manly heart that tries to cloak all favors with a show of roughness and unwillingness beats in its every look and glance."

"And makes it noble," added Caleb in his quiet desperation.

"And makes it noble!" cried the blind girl. "He is older than May, father?"

"Ye-es," said Caleb, reluctantly. "He's a little older than May, but that don't signify.

"Bertha," said Caleb softly, "what has happened? How changed you are, my darling, in a few hours—since this morning. *You* silent and dull all day! What is it? Tell me!"

"Oh, father, father!" cried the blind girl, bursting into tears. "Oh, my hard, hard fate!"

Caleb drew his hand across his eyes before he answered her.

"But think how cheerful and how happy you have been, Bertha. How good, and how much loved, by many people."

"That strikes me to the heart, dear father! Always so mindful of me! Always so kind to me!"

Caleb was very much perplexed to understand her.

"To be—to be blind, Bertha, my poor dear," he faltered, "is a great affliction; but——"

"I have never felt it!" cried the blind girl. "I have never felt it in its fulness. Never! I have sometimes wished that I could see you, or could see him; only once, dear father; only for one little minute. But, father! Oh, my good, gentle father, bear with me, if I am wicked!" said the blind girl. "This is not the sorrow that so weighs me down!"

"Bertha, my dear," said Caleb, "I have something on my mind I want to tell you, while we are alone. Hear me kindly. I have a confession to make to you, my darling."

"A confession, father?"

"I have wandered from the truth and lost myself, my child," said Caleb, with a pitiable expression in his bewildered face. "I have wandered from the truth, intending to be kind to you; and have been cruel."

She turned her wonder-stricken face toward him, and repeated, "Cruel! He cruel to me!" cried Bertha, with a smile of incredulity.

"Not meaning it, my child," said Caleb. "But I have been; though I never suspected it till yesterday. My dear, blind daughter, hear me and forgive me! The world you live in, heart of mine, doesn't exist as I have represented it. The eyes you have trusted in have been false to you."

She turned her wonder-stricken face toward him still.

"Your road in life was rough, my poor one," said Caleb, "and I meant to smooth it for you. I have altered objects, invented many things that never have been, to make you happier. I have had concealments from you, put deceptions on you, God forgive me! and surrounded you with fancies."

"But living people are not fancies," she said hurriedly, turning very pale, and still retiring from him. "You can't change them."

"I have done so, Bertha," pleaded Caleb. "There is one person that you know, my Dove——"

"Oh, father! why do you say I know?" she answered in a tone of keen reproach. "What and

whom do I know! I, who have no leader! I, so miserably blind!"

In the anguish of her heart she stretched out her hands, as if she were groping her way; then spread them, in a manner most forlorn and sad, upon her face.

"The marriage that takes place today," said Caleb, "is with a stern, sordid, grinding man. A hard master to you and me, my dear, for many years, ugly in his looks and in his nature. Cold and callous always. Unlike what I have painted him to you in everything, my child; in everything."

"Oh, why," cried the blind girl, tortured, as it seemed, almost beyond endurance, "why did you ever do this? Why did you ever fill my heart so full, and then come in, like death, and tear away the objects of my love? Oh, heaven, how blind I am! How helpless and alone!"

Her afflicted father hung his head, and offered no reply in his penitence and sorrow.

"Tell me what my home is. What it truly is."

"It is a poor place, Bertha; very poor and bare indeed. The house will scarcely keep out wind and rain another winter. It is as roughly shielded from the weather, Bertha, as your poor father in his sackcloth coat."

"Those presents that I took such care of, that came almost at my wish, and were so dearly welcome to me," she said, trembling, "where did they come from?"

Caleb did not answer. She knew already, and was silent.

"I see, I understand," said Bertha, "and now I am looking at you, at my kind, loving, compassionate father; tell me what is he like?"

"An old man, my child; thin, bent, gray-haired, worn-out with hard work and sorrow; a weak, foolish, deceitful old man."

The blind girl threw herself on her knees before him, and took his gray head in her arms. "It is my sight, it is my sight restored," she cried. "I have been blind, but now I see; I have never till now truly seen my father. Does he think that there is a gallant, handsome father in this earth that I could love so dearly, cherish so devotedly, as this worn and gray-headed old man? Father, there is not a gray hair on your head that shall be forgotten in my prayers and thanks to heaven."

"My Bertha!" sobbed Caleb, "and the brisk smart father in the blue coat—he's gone, my child."

"Dearest father, no, he's not gone, nothing is gone, everything I loved and believed in is here in this worn, old father of mine, and more, oh, so much more, too! I have been happy and contented, but I shall be happier and more contented still, now that I know what you are. I am *not* blind, father, any longer."

—*The Cricket on the Hearth*

DAVID COPPERFIELD

MY name, like my father's before me, is David Copperfield. When I was little, I lived with my mother in a pretty house in the village of Blunderstone in Suffolk. I had never known my father, who died before I could remember anything, and I had neither brothers nor sisters. My pretty young mother, and our kind, good servant, Peggotty, took care of me, and made me very happy. We had few friends, and the only relation my mother talked about was an aunt of my father's, a tall and rather terrible old lady, from all accounts, who had once been to see us when I was quite a tiny baby, and had been so angry to find I was not a little girl that she had left the house quite offended, and had never been heard of since. One visitor, a tall, dark gentleman, I did not like at all, and was rather inclined to be jealous that my mother should be so friendly with the stranger.

Peggotty and I were sitting one night by the parlor fire, alone. I had been reading to Peggotty about crocodiles in a little book that I liked very much. I was tired of reading, and dead sleepy; but having leave, as a high treat, to sit up until my mother came home from spending the evening at a

neighbor's, I would rather have died upon my post (of course) than have gone to bed. I had reached that stage of sleepiness when Peggotty seemed to swell and grow immensely large. I propped my eyelids open with my two forefingers, and looked perseveringly at her as she sat at work; at the little house with a thatched roof, where the yard measure lived; at her work box with a sliding lid, with a view of St. Paul's Cathedral (with a pink dome) painted on the top; at the brass thimble on her finger; at herself, whom I thought lovely. I felt so sleepy that I knew if I lost sight of anything, for a moment, I was gone.

"Peggotty," says I, suddenly, "were you ever married?"

"Lord, Master Davy!" replied Peggotty. "What's put marriage in your head?"

She answered with such a start that it quite awoke me. And then she stopped in her work and looked at me, with her needle drawn out to its thread's length.

"But *were* you ever married, Peggotty?" says I. "You are a very handsome woman, ain't you?"

"Me, handsome, Davy!" said Peggotty. "Lawk, no, my dear! But what put marriage in your head?"

"I don't know. You mayn't marry more than one person at a time, may you, Peggotty?"

"Certainly not," says Peggotty, with the promptest decision.

"But if you marry a person, and the person dies, why then you may marry another person, mayn't you, Peggotty?"

"You may," says Peggotty, "if you choose, my dear. That's a matter of opinion."

"But what is your opinion, Peggotty?" said I.

I asked her and looked curiously at her, because she looked so curiously at me.

"My opinion is," said Peggotty, taking her eyes from me, after a little indecision, and going on with her work, "that I never was married myself, Master Davy, and that I don't expect to be. That's all I know about the subject."

"You ain't cross, I suppose, Peggotty, are you?" said I, after sitting quiet for a minute.

I really thought she was, she had been so short with me; but I was quite mistaken; for she laid aside her work (which was a stocking of her own) and opening her arms wide, took my curly head within them, and gave it a good squeeze. I know it was a good squeeze, because, being very plump, whenever she made any little exertion after she was dressed, some of the buttons on the back of her gown flew off. And I recollect that two burst to the opposite side of the parlor, while she was hugging me.

One day Peggotty asked me if I would like to go with her on a visit to her brother at Yarmouth.

"Is your brother an agreeable man, Peggotty?" I inquired.

"Oh, what an agreeable man he is!" cried Peggotty. "Then there's the sea, and the boats and ships, and the fishermen, and the beach. And 'Am to play with."

Ham was her nephew. I was quite anxious to go when I heard of all these delights; but my mother, what would she do all alone? Peggotty told me my mother was going to pay a visit to some friends, and would be sure to let me go. So all was arranged, and we were to start the next day in the carrier's cart. I was so eager that I wanted to put my hat and coat on the night before! But when the time came to say good-by to my dear mamma I cried a little, for I had never left her before. It was a rather slow way of traveling, and I was very tired and sleepy when I arrived at Yarmouth, and found Ham waiting to meet me. He was a great strong fellow, six feet high, and took me on his back and the box under his arm to carry both to the house. I was delighted to find that this house was made of a real, big, black boat, that had been drawn far up on the sand. It had a door and windows cut in the side, and an iron funnel sticking out of the roof for a chimney. Inside it was very cozy and clean, and I had a tiny bedroom in the stern. I was very much pleased to find a little girl, about my own age, to play with. After tea I said:

"Mr. Peggotty."

"Sir," says he.

"Did you give your son the name of Ham because you lived in a sort of ark?"

Mr. Peggotty seemed to think it a deep idea, but answered,

"No, sir. I never giv' him no name."

"Who gave him that name, then?" said I, putting question number two of the catechism to Mr. Peggotty.

"Why, sir, his father giv' it him," said Mr. Peggotty.

"I thought you were his father."

"My brother Joe was *his* father," said Mr. Peggotty.

"Dead, Mr. Peggotty?" I hinted, after a respectful pause.

"Drowndead," said Mr. Peggotty.

I was very much surprised that Mr. Peggotty was not Ham's father, and began to wonder whether I was mistaken about his relationship to anybody else there. I was so curious to know that I made up my mind to have it out with Mr. Peggotty.

"Little Em'ly," I said, glancing at her. "She is your daughter, isn't she, Mr. Peggotty?"

"No, sir. My brother-in-law, Tom, was *her* father."

I couldn't help it. "——Dead, Mr. Peggotty?" I hinted, after another respectful silence.

"Drowndead," said Mr. Peggotty.

I felt the difficulty of resuming the subject, but

had not got to the bottom of it yet, and must get to the bottom somehow. So I said:

"Haven't you *any* children, Mr. Peggotty?"

"No, master," he answered, with a short laugh. "I'm a bacheldore."

"A bachelor!" I said, astonished. "Why, who's that, Mr. Peggotty?" pointing to the person in the apron who was knitting.

"That's Missis Gummidge," said Mr. Peggotty.

"Gummidge, Mr. Peggotty?"

But at this point Peggotty—I mean my own Peggotty—made such impressive motions to me not to ask any more questions that I could only sit and look at all the company, until it was time to go to bed.

Mrs. Gummidge lived with them, too, and did the cooking and cleaning, for she was a poor widow and had no home of her own. I thought Mr. Peggotty was very good to take all these people to live with him, and I was quite right, for Mr. Peggotty was only a poor man himself and had to work hard to get a living.

Almost as soon as morning shone upon the oyster-shell frame of my mirror I was out of bed, and out with little Em'ly picking up stones upon the beach.

"You're quite a sailor, I suppose?" I said to Em'ly. I don't know that I supposed anything of the kind, but I felt it an act of gallantry to say

something; and a shining sail close to us made such a pretty little image of itself, at the moment, in her bright eye, that it came into my head to say this.

"No," replied Em'ly, shaking her head, "I'm afraid of the sea."

"Afraid!" I said, with a becoming air of boldness, and looking very big at the mighty ocean. "*I* ain't."

"Ah! but it's cruel," said Em'ly. "I have seen it very cruel to some of our men. I have seen it tear a boat as big as our house all to pieces."

"I hope it wasn't the boat that——"

"That father was drowned in?" said Em'ly. "No. Not that one. I never saw that boat."

"Nor him?" I asked her.

Little Em'ly shook her head. "Not to remember."

Here was a coincidence! I immediately went into an explanation how I had never seen my own father; and how my mother and I had always lived by ourselves in the happiest state imaginable, and lived so then, and always meant to live so; and how my father's grave was in the churchyard near our house, and shaded by a tree, beneath the boughs of which I had walked and heard the birds sing many a pleasant morning. But there were some differences between Em'ly's orphanhood and mine, it appeared. She had lost her mother before her father, and where her father's grave was no one

knew, except that it was somewhere in the depths of the sea.

"Besides," said Em'ly, as she looked about for shells and pebbles, "your father was a gentleman and your mother is a lady; and my father was a fisherman and my mother was a fisherman's daughter, and my Uncle Dan is a fisherman."

"Dan is Mr. Peggotty, is he?" said I.

"Uncle Dan—yonder," answered Em'ly, nodding at the boat house.

"Yes. I mean him. He must be very good, I should think."

"Good?" said Em'ly. "If I was ever to be a lady I'd give him a sky-blue coat with diamond buttons, nankeen trousers, a red velvet waistcoat, a cocked hat, a large gold watch, a silver pipe, and a box of money."

I said I had no doubt that Mr. Peggotty well deserved these treasures.

Little Em'ly had stopped and looked up at the sky in her enumeration of these articles, as if they were a glorious vision. We went on again, picking up shells and pebbles.

"You would like to be a lady?" I said.

Em'ly looked at me, and laughed and nodded.

"I should like it very much. We would all be gentlefolks together, then. Me, and uncle, and Ham, and Mrs. Gummidge. We wouldn't mind then, when there come stormy weather. Not for our own

sakes, I mean. We would for the poor fishermen's, to be sure, and we'd help 'em with money when they come to any hurt."

I was very sorry to leave these kind people and especially little Em'ly, but still I was glad to think that I should get back to my own home. When I reached it, however, I found a great change. My mother was married to the dark man I did not like, whose name was Mr. Murdstone, and he was a stern, hard man, who had no love for me, and did not allow my mother to pet and indulge me as she had done before. Mr. Murdstone's sister came to live with us, and as she was even more difficult to please than her brother, and disliked boys, my life was no longer a happy one. I tried to be good and obedient, for I knew it made my mother very unhappy to see me punished and found fault with. I had always had lessons with my mother, and as she was patient and gentle, I had enjoyed learning to read, but now I had a great many very hard lessons to do, and was so frightened when Mr. and Miss Murdstone were in the room, that I did not get on at all well, and was continually in disgrace.

Let me remember how it used to be, and bring one morning back again.

I come into the second-best parlor after breakfast, with my books, and an exercise book and a slate. My mother is ready for me at her writing desk, but not half so ready as Mr. Murdstone in his easy

chair by the window (though he pretends to be reading a book), or as Miss Murdstone, sitting near my mother stringing steel beads. The very sight of these two has such an influence over me that I begin to feel the words I have been at infinite pains to get into my head all sliding away, and going, I don't know where. I wonder where they *do* go, by the by?

I hand the first book to my mother. Perhaps it is a grammar, perhaps a history, or a geography. I take a last drowning look at the page as I give it into her hand, and start off aloud at a racing pace while I have got it fresh. I trip over a word. Mr. Murdstone looks up. I trip over another word. Miss Murdstone looks up. I redden, tumble over half a dozen words, and stop. I think my mother would show me the book if she dared, but she does not dare, and she says softly:

"Oh, Davy, Davy!"

"Now, Clara," says Mr. Murdstone, "be firm with the boy. Don't say, 'Oh, Davy, Davy!' That's childish. He knows his lesson, or he does not know it."

"He does *not* know it," Miss Murdstone interposes awfully.

"I am really afraid he does not," says my mother.

"Then you see, Clara," returns Miss Murdstone, "you should just give him the book back, and make him know it."

"Yes, certainly," says my mother, "that is what I intend to do, my dear Jane. Now, Davy, try once more, and don't be stupid."

I obey the first clause of the injunction by trying once more, but am not so successful with the second, for I am very stupid. I tumble down before I get to the old place, at a point where I was all right before, and stop to think. But I can't think about the lesson. I think of the number of yards of net in Miss Murdstone's cap, or of the price of Mr. Murdstone's dressing gown, or any such ridiculous problem that I have no business with, and don't want to have anything at all to do with. Mr. Murdstone makes a movement of impatience which I have been expecting for a long time. Miss Murdstone does the same. My mother glances submissively at them, shuts the book, and lays it by as an arrear to be worked out when my other tasks are done.

There is a pile of these arrears very soon, and it swells like a rolling snowball. The bigger it gets, the more stupid I get. The case is so hopeless, and I feel that I am wallowing in such a bog of nonsense, that I give up all idea of getting out, and abandon myself to my fate. The despairing way in which my mother and I look at each other, as I blunder on, is truly melancholy. But the greatest effect in these miserable lessons is when my mother (thinking nobody is observing her) tries to give me the cue by

the motion of her lips. At that instant, Miss Murdstone, who has been lying in wait for nothing else all along, says in a deep, warning voice:

"Clara!"

My mother starts, colors, and smiles faintly. Mr. Murdstone comes out of his chair, takes the book, and turns me out of the room by the shoulders.

Day by day went along in this fashion. My only pleasure was to go up into a little room at the top of the house where I had found a number of books that had belonged to my own father, and I would sit and read about Robinson Crusoe, and many tales of travels and adventures, and I imagined myself to be sometimes one and sometimes another hero, and went about for days with the centerpiece out of an old set of boot-trees, pretending to be a captain in the British Royal Navy.

One morning when I went into the parlor with my books, I found my mother looking anxious, Miss Murdstone looking firm, and Mr. Murdstone binding something round the bottom of a cane—a lithe and limber cane, which he left off binding when I came in, and poised and switched it threateningly in the air.

"I tell you, Clara," said Mr. Murdstone, "I have often been flogged myself."

"To be sure; of course," said Miss Murdstone.

"Certainly, my dear Jane," faltered my mother, meekly. "But do you think it did Edward good?"

"Do you think it did Edward harm, Clara?" asked Mr. Murdstone, gravely.

"That's the point!" said his sister.

To this my mother returned, "Certainly, my dear Jane," and said no more.

I felt apprehensive that I was personally interested in this dialogue, and sought Mr. Murdstone's eye as it lighted on mine.

"Now, David," he said, "you must be far more careful today than usual." He gave the cane another poise and another switch; and having finished his preparation of it, laid it down beside him, with an expressive look, and took up his book.

This was a good freshener to my presence of mind, so a beginning. I felt the words of my lessons slipping off, not one by one, or line by line, but by the entire page. I tried to lay hold of them; but they seemed, if I may so express it, to have put skates on, and to skim away from me with a smoothness of which there was no checking.

We began badly, and went on worse. I had come in with an idea of distinguishing myself rather, conceiving that I was very well prepared; but it turned out to be quite a mistake. Book after book was added to the heap of failures, Miss Murdstone being firmly watchful of us all the time. And when we came at last to the five thousand cheeses (canes he made it that day, I remember), my mother burst out crying.

"Clara!" said Miss Murdstone, in her warning voice.

"I am not quite well, my dear Jane, I think," said my mother.

I saw him wink, solemnly, at his sister, as he rose and said, taking up the cane:

"Why, Jane, we can hardly expect Clara to bear, with perfect firmness, the worry and torment that David has occasioned her today. Clara is greatly strengthened and improved, but we can hardly expect so much from her. David, you and I will go upstairs, boy."

As he took me out at the door, my mother ran toward us. Miss Murdstone said, "Clara! are you a perfect fool?" and interfered. I saw my mother stop her ears then, and I heard her crying.

He walked me up to my room slowly and gravely—I am certain he had a delight in that formal parade of executing justice—and when we got there, suddenly twisted my head under his arm.

"Mr. Murdstone! Sir!" I cried to him. "Don't! Pray don't beat me! I have tried to learn, sir, but I can't learn while you and Miss Murdstone are by. I can't, indeed!"

"Can't you, indeed, David?" he said. "We'll try that."

He had my head as in a vise, but I twined round him somehow, and stopped him for a moment, entreating him not to beat me. It was only for a

moment that I stopped him, for he cut me heavily an instant afterwards, and in the same instant I caught the hand with which he held me in my mouth, between my teeth, and bit it through. It sets my teeth on edge to think of it.

He beat me then, as if he would have beaten me to death. Above all the noise we made, I heard them running up the stairs, and crying out—I heard my mother crying out—and Peggotty. Then he was gone; and the door was locked outside; and I was lying, fevered and hot, and torn, and sore, and raging in my puny way, upon the floor.

How well I recollect, when I became quiet, what an unnatural stillness seemed to reign through the whole house! How well I remember, when my smart and passion began to cool, how wicked I began to feel!

I sat listening for a long while, but there was not a sound. I crawled up from the floor, and saw my face in the glass, so swollen, red, and ugly that it almost frightened me. My stripes were sore and stiff, and made me cry afresh, when I moved; but they were nothing to the guilt I felt. It lay heavier on my breast than if I had been a most atrocious criminal, I dare say.

It had begun to grow dark, and I had shut the window (I had been lying, for the most part, with my head upon the sill, by turns crying, dozing, and looking listlessly out), when the key was turned,

and Miss Murdstone came in with some bread and meat and milk. These she put down upon the table without a word, glaring at me the while with exemplary firmness, and then retired, locking the door after her.

I never shall forget the waking, next morning; the being cheerful and fresh for the first moment, and then the being weighed down by the stale and dismal oppression of remembrance. Miss Murdstone reappeared before I was out of bed; told me, in so many words, that I was free to walk in the garden for half an hour and no longer; and retired, leaving the door open, that I might avail myself of that permission.

I did so, and did so every morning of my imprisonment, which lasted five days. If I could have seen my mother alone, I should have gone down on my knees to her and besought her forgiveness; but I saw no one, Miss Murdstone excepted, during the whole time.

The length of those five days I can convey no idea of to anyone. They occupy the place of years in my remembrance.

On the last night of my restraint, I was awakened by hearing my own name spoken in a whisper. I started up in bed, and, putting out my arms in the dark, said:

"Is that you, Peggotty?"

There was no immediate answer, but presently

I heard my name again, in a tone so very mysterious and awful, that I think I should have gone into a fit, if it had not occurred to me that it must have come through the keyhole.

I groped my way to the door, and, putting my own lips to the keyhole, whispered:

"Is that you, Peggotty, dear?"

"Yes, my own precious Davy," she replied. "Be as soft as a mouse, or the cat'll hear us."

I understood this to mean Miss Murdstone, and was sensible of the urgency of the case, her room being close by.

"How's mamma, dear Peggotty? Is she very angry with me?"

I could hear Peggotty crying softly on her side of the keyhole, as I was doing on mine, before she answered, "No. Not very."

"What is going to be done with me, Peggotty, dear? Do you know?"

"School. Near London," was Peggotty's answer. I was obliged to get her to repeat it, for she spoke it the first time quite down my throat in consequence of my having forgotten to take my mouth away from the keyhole and put my ear there; and, though her words tickled me a good deal, I didn't hear them.

"When, Peggotty?"

"Tomorrow."

"Is that the reason why Miss Murdstone took

the clothes out of my drawers?" which she had done, though I had forgotten to mention it.

"Yes," said Peggotty. "Box."

"Shan't I see mamma?"

"Yes," said Peggotty. "Morning."

Then Peggotty fitted her mouth close to the keyhole, and delivered these words through it with as much feeling and earnestness as a keyhole has ever been the medium of communicating, I will venture to assert, shooting in each broken little sentence in a convulsive little burst of its own.

"Davy, dear. If I ain't been azackly as intimate with you. Lately, as I used to be. It ain't because I don't love you. Just as well and more, my pretty poppet. It's because I thought it better for you. And for someone else besides. Davy, my darling, are you listening? Can you hear?"

"Ye—ye—ye—yes, Peggotty," I sobbed.

"My own!" said Peggotty, with infinite compassion. "What I want to say, is. That you must never forget me. For I'll never forget you. And I'll take as much care of your mamma, Davy, as I ever took of you. And I won't leave her. The day may come when she'll be glad to lay her poor head on her stupid, cross old Peggotty's arm again. And I'll write to you, my dear, though I ain't no scholar. And I'll—I'll—" Peggotty fell to kissing the keyhole, as she couldn't kiss me.

David Copperfield leaves home in the carrier's cart

"Thank you, dear Peggotty," said I. "Oh, thank you! Thank you! Will you promise me one thing, Peggotty? Will you write and tell Mr. Peggotty and little Em'ly and Mrs. Gummidge and Ham that I am not so bad as they might suppose, and that I sent 'em all my love—especially to little Em'ly? Will you, if you please, Peggotty?"

The kind soul promised, and we both of us kissed the keyhole with the greatest affection—I patted it with my hand, I recollect, as if it had been her honest face—and parted.

In the morning Miss Murdstone appeared as usual, and told me I was going to school; which was not altogether such news to me as she supposed. She also informed me that when I was dressed, I was to come downstairs into the parlor and have my breakfast. There I found my mother, very pale and with red eyes; into whose arms I ran, and begged her pardon from my suffering soul.

"Oh, Davy!" she said. "That you could hurt anyone I love! Try to be better, pray to be better! I forgive you; but I am so grieved, Davy, that you should have such bad passions in your heart."

Miss Murdstone was good enough to take me out to the cart, and to say on the way that she hoped I would repent, before I came to a bad end; and then I got into the cart, and the lazy horse walked off with it.

We might have gone about half a mile, and my pocket handkerchief was quite wet through, when the carrier stopped short.

Looking out to ascertain for what, I saw, to my amazement, Peggotty burst from a hedge and climb into the cart. She took me in both her arms and squeezed me until the pressure on my nose was extremely painful, though I never thought of that until afterwards, when I found it very tender. Not a single word did Peggotty speak. Releasing one of her arms, she put it down in her pocket to the elbow, and brought out some paper bags of cakes, which she crammed into my pockets, and a purse which she put into my hand, but not one word did she say. After another and a final squeeze with both arms, she got down from the cart and ran away; and my belief is, and has always been, without a solitary button on her gown. I picked up one, of several that were rolling about, and treasured it as a keepsake for a long time.

The carrier looked at me, as if to inquire if she were coming back. I shook my head, and said I thought not. "Then come up!" said the carrier to the lazy horse, who came up accordingly.

Having by this time cried as much as I possibly could, I began to think it was of no use crying any more, especially as neither Roderick Random nor that captain in the Royal British Navy had ever cried, that I could remember, in trying situations.

The carrier seeing me in this resolution, proposed that my pocket handkerchief should be spread upon the horse's back to dry. I thanked him and assented; and particularly small it looked under those circumstances.

I had now leisure to examine the purse. It was a stiff leather purse, with a snap, and had three bright shillings in it, which Peggotty had evidently polished up with whitening, for my greater delight. But its precious contents were two half-crowns folded together in a bit of paper, on which was written in my mother's hand, "For Davy. With my love." I was so overcome by this, that I asked the carrier to be so good as to reach me my pocket handkerchief again, but he said he thought I had better do without it; and I thought I really had, so I wiped my eyes on my sleeve and stopped myself.

For good, too; though in consequence of my previous emotions, I was still occasionally seizd with a stormy sob. After we had jogged on for some little time, I asked the carrier if he was going all the way.

"All the way where?" inquired the carrier.

"There," I said.

"Where's there?" inquired the carrier.

"Near London," I said.

"Why, that horse," said the carrier, jerking the rein to point him out, "would be deader than pork afore he got over half the ground."

"Are you only going to Yarmouth?" I asked.

"That's about it," said the carrier. "And there I shall take you to the stagecutch, and the stagecutch that'll take you to—wherever it is."

I shared my cakes with the carrier, who asked if Peggotty made them, and I told him yes, she did all our cooking. The carrier looked thoughtful, and then asked if I would send a message to Peggotty from him. I agreed, and the message was "Barkis is willing." While I was waiting for the coach at Yarmouth, I wrote to Peggotty:

"My Dear Peggotty: I have come here safe. Barkis is willing. My love to mamma. Yours affectionately.

"P. S. He says he particularly wanted you to know *Barkis is willing.*"

At Yarmouth I found dinner was ordered for me, and felt very shy at having a table all to myself, and very much alarmed when the waiter told me he had seen a gentleman fall down dead after drinking some of their beer. I said I would have some water, and was quite grateful to the waiter for drinking the ale that had been ordered for me, for fear the people of the hotel should be offended. He also helped me to eat my dinner, and accepted one of my bright shillings.

After a long, tiring journey by the coach, for there were no trains in those days, I arrived in London and was taken to the school at Blackheath by one of the masters, Mr. Mell.

I gazed upon the schoolroom into which he took me as the most forlorn and desolate place I had ever seen. I see it now, a long room, with three long rows of desks, and six of forms, and bristling all round with pegs for hats and slates. Scraps of old copy books and exercises littered the dirty floor.

Mr. Mell having left me, I went softly to the upper end of the room, observing all this as I crept along. Suddenly I came upon a pasteboard placard, beautifully written, which was lying on the desk, and bore these words, "*Take care of him. He bites.*"

I got upon the desk immediately, apprehensive of at least a great dog underneath. But, though I looked all round with anxious eyes, I could see nothing of him. I was still engaged in peering about when Mr. Mell came back and asked me what I did up there.

"I beg your pardon, sir," says I, "if you please, I'm looking for the dog."

"Dog," says he. "What dog?"

"Isn't it a dog, sir?"

"Isn't what a dog?"

"That's to be taken care of, sir; that bites."

"No, Copperfield," says he, gravely, "that's not a dog. That's a boy. My instructions are, Copperfield, to put this placard on your back. I am sorry to make such a beginning with you, but I must do it."

With that, he took me down, and tied the placard, which was neatly constructed for the purpose,

on my shoulders like a knapsack; and wherever I went, afterwards, I carried it.

What I suffered from that placard, nobody can imagine. Whether it was possible for people to see me or not, I always fancied that somebody was reading it. It was no relief to turn round and find nobody; for wherever my back was, there I imagined somebody always to be.

There was an old door in this playground, on which the boys had a custom of carving their names. It was completely covered with such inscriptions. In my dread of the end of the vacation and their coming back, I could not read one boy's name, without inquiring of myself in what tone and with what emphasis *he* would read, "Take care of him. He bites."

There was one boy—a certain J. Steerforth—who cut his name very deep and very often, who, I conceived, would read it in a rather strong voice, and afterward pull my hair. There was another boy, one Tommy Traddles, who I dreaded would make game of it, and pretend to be dreadfully frightened of me. There was a third, George Demple, who I fancied would sing it. I have looked, a little shrinking creature, at that door, until the owners of all the names—there were five-and-forty of them in the school then, Mr. Mell said—seemed to send me to Coventry by general acclamation, and to cry out, each in his own way, "Take care of him. He bites!"

Tommy Traddles was the first boy who returned. He introduced himself by informing me that I should find his name on the right-hand corner of the gate, over the top bolt; upon that I said, "Traddles?" to which he replied, "The same," and then he asked me for a full account of myself and family.

It was a happy circumstance for me that Traddles came back first. He enjoyed my placard so much that he saved me from the embarrassment of either disclosure or concealment, by presenting me to every other boy who came back, great or small, immediately on his arrival, in this form of introduction, "Look here! Here's a game!" Happily, too, the greater part of the boys came back low-spirited, and were not so boisterous at my expense as I had expected. Some of them certainly did dance about me like wild Indians, and the greater part could not resist the temptation of pretending that I was a dog, and patting and smoothing me lest I should bite, and saying, "Lie down, sir!" and calling me Towzer. This was naturally confusing, among so many strangers, and cost me some tears, but on the whole it was much better than I had anticipated.

I was not considered as being formally received into the school, however, until J. Steerforth arrived. Before this boy, who was reputed to be a great scholar, and was very good-looking, and at least half-a-dozen years my senior, I was carried as before a magistrate. He inquired, under a shed in the

playground, into the particulars of my punishment, and was pleased to express his opinion that it was a "jolly shame"; for which I became bound to him ever afterwards.

"What money have you got, Copperfield?" he said, walking aside with me when he had disposed of my affair in these terms.

I told him seven shillings.

"You had better give it to me to take care of," he said. "At least, you can, if you like. You needn't if you don't like."

I hastened to comply with his friendly suggestion, and, opening Peggotty's purse, turned it upside down into his hand.

"Do you want to spend anything now?" he asked me.

"No, thank you," I replied.

"You can, if you like, you know," said Steerforth. "Say the word."

"No, thank you, sir," I repeated.

"Perhaps you'd like to spend a couple of shillings or so in a bottle of currant wine by and by, up in the bedroom?" said Steerforth. "You belong to my bedroom, I find."

It certainly had not occurred to me before, but I said, "Yes, I should like that."

"Very good," said Steerforth. "You'll be glad to spend another shilling or so in almond cakes, I dare say?"

I said, "Yes, I should like that, too."

"And another shilling or so in biscuits, and another in fruit, eh?" said Steerforth. "I say, young Copperfield, you're going it!"

I smiled because he smiled, but I was a little troubled in my mind, too.

"Well!" said Steerforth. "We must make it stretch as far as we can; that's all. I'll do the best in my power for you. I can go out when I like, and I'll smuggle the prog in." With these words he put the money in his pocket, and kindly told me not to make myself uneasy; he would take care it should be all right.

He was as good as his word, if that were all right, which I had a secret misgiving was nearly all wrong—for I feared it was a waste of my mother's two half-crowns—though I had preserved the piece of paper they were wrapped in, which was a precious saving. When we went upstairs to bed, he produced the whole seven shillings' worth, and laid it out on my bed in the moonlight, saying:

"There you are, young Copperfield, and a royal spread you've got!"

I couldn't think of doing the honors of the feast at my time of life, while he was by; my hand shook at the very thought of it. I begged him to do me the favor of presiding; and my request being seconded by the other boys who were in that room, he acceded to it, and sat upon my pillow, handing round the

viands—with perfect fairness, I must say—and dispensing the currant wine in a little glass without a foot, which was his own property. As to me, I sat on his left hand, and the rest were grouped about us, on the nearest beds and on the floor.

How well I recollect our sitting there, talking in whispers; or their talking, and my respectfully listening, I ought rather to say; the moonlight falling a little way into the room, through the window, painting a pale window on the floor, and the greater part of us in shadow, except when Steerforth dipped a match into a phosphorus box, when he wanted to look for anything on the board, and shed a blue glare over us that was gone directly. A certain mysterious feeling, consequent on the darkness, the secrecy of the revel, and the whisper in which everything was said, steals over me again. I listen to all they tell me, with a vague feeling of solemnity and awe, which makes me glad they are all so near, and frightens me (though I feign to laugh) when Traddles pretends to see a ghost in the corner.

I heard all kinds of things about the school and all belonging to it. I heard that Mr. Creakle was the sternest and most severe of masters; that he laid about him, right and left, every day of his life, charging in among the boys like a trooper, and slashing away, unmercifully.

I heard that the man with the wooden leg, whose name was Tungay, was an obstinate barbarian who

had formerly assisted in the hop business, but had come into the line with Mr. Creakle, in consequence, as was supposed among the boys, of his having broken his leg in Mr. Creakle's service, and having done a deal of dishonest work for him, and knowing his secrets.

But the greatest wonder that I heard of Mr. Creakle was there being one boy in the school on whom he never ventured to lay a hand, and that boy being J. Steerforth. Steerforth himself confirmed this when it was stated, and said that he should like to begin to see him do it. On being asked by a mild boy (not me) how he would proceed if he did begin to see him do it, he dipped a match into his phosphorus box on purpose to shed a glare over his reply, and said he would commence with knocking him down with a blow on the forehead from the seven-and-six-penny ink bottle that was always on the mantelpiece. We sat in the dark for some time, breathless.

I heard that Miss Creakle was regarded by the school in general as being in love with Steerforth; and I am sure, as I sat in the dark, thinking of his nice voice, and his fine face, and his easy manner, and his curling hair, I thought it very likely. I heard that Mr. Mell was not a bad sort of fellow, but hadn't a sixpence to bless himself with; and that there was no doubt that old Mrs. Mell, his mother, was as poor as Job.

One day, Traddles (the most unfortunate boy in the world) breaks a window accidentally with a ball. I shudder at this moment with the tremendous sensation of seeing it done, and feeling that the ball has bounded on to Mr. Creakle's sacred head.

Poor Traddles! In a tight sky-blue suit that made his arms and legs like German sausages, or roly-poly puddings, he was the merriest and most miserable of all the boys. He was always being caned—I think he was caned every day that half-year, except one holiday Monday, when he was only rulered on both hands—and was always going to write to his uncle about it, and never did. After laying his head on the desk for a little while, he would cheer up somehow, begin to laugh again, and draw skeletons all over his slate before his eyes were dry. I used at first to wonder what comfort Traddles found in drawing skeletons. But I believe he only did it because they were easy, and didn't want any features.

He was very honorable, Traddles was; and held it as a solemn duty in the boys to stand by one another. He suffered for this on several occasions; and particularly once, when Steerforth laughed in church, and the beadle thought it was Traddles, and took him out. I see him now, going away in custody, despised by the congregation. He never said who was the real offender, though he smarted for it next day, and was imprisoned so many hours that

he came forth with a whole churchyard full of skeletons swarming all over his Latin Dictionary. But he had his reward. Steerforth said there was nothing of the sneak in Traddles, and we all felt that to be the highest praise. For my part, I could have gone through a great deal (though I was much less brave than Traddles, and nothing like so old) to have won such a recompense.

To see Steerforth walk to church before us, arm in arm with Miss Creakle, was one of the great sights of my life. I didn't think Miss Creakle equal to little Em'ly in point of beauty, and I didn't love her (I didn't dare); but I thought her a young lady of extraordinary attractions, and in point of gentility not to be surpassed. When Steerforth, in white trousers, carried her parasol for her, I felt proud to know him; and believed that she could not choose but adore him with all her heart. Mr. Sharp and Mr. Mell were both notable personages in my eyes; but Steerforth was to them what the sun was to two stars.

An accidental circumstance cemented the intimacy between Steerforth and me, in a manner that inspired me with great pride and satisfaction, though it sometimes led to inconvenience. It happened on one occasion, when he was doing me the honor of talking to me in the playground, that I hazarded the observation that something or somebody, I forget what now, was like something or somebody in Peregrine Pickle. He said nothing at the time; but when

I was going to bed at night, asked me if I had got that book.

I told him no, and explained how it was that I had read it, and all those other books of which I had made mention.

"And do you recollect them?" Steerforth said.

"Oh, yes," I replied. I had a good memory, and I believed I recollected them very well.

"Then I tell you what, young Copperfield," said Steerforth, "you shall tell 'em to me. I can't get to sleep very early at night, and I generally wake rather early in the morning. We'll go over 'em one after another. We'll make some regular Arabian Nights of it."

I felt extremely flattered by this arrangement, and we commenced carrying it into execution that very evening.

Steerforth showed his consideration in one particular instance, in an unflinching manner that was a little tantalizing, I suspect, to poor Traddles and the rest. Peggotty's promised letter—what a comfortable letter it was!—arrived before "the half" was many weeks old; and with it a cake in a perfect nest of oranges, and two bottles of cowslip wine. This treasure, as in duty bound, I laid at the feet of Steerforth, and begged him to dispense.

"Now, I'll tell you what, young Copperfield," said he, "the wine shall be kept to wet your whistle when you are story-telling."

I blushed at the idea, and begged him, in my modesty, not to think of it. But he said he had observed I was sometimes hoarse, a little roupy was his exact expression, and it should be, every drop, devoted to the purpose he had mentioned. Accordingly, it was locked up in his box, and drawn off by himself in a phial, and administered to me through a piece of quill in the cork, when I was supposed to be in want of a restorative. Sometimes, to make it a more sovereign specific, he was so kind as to squeeze orange juice into it, or to stir it up with ginger, or dissolve a peppermint drop in it.

We seem to me to have been months over Peregrine, and months more over the other stories. The institution never flagged for want of a story, I am certain; and the wine lasted out almost as well as the matter. Poor Traddles—I never think of that boy but with a strange disposition to laugh, and with tears in my eyes—was a sort of chorus, in general; and affected to be convulsed with mirth at the comic parts, and to be overcome with fear when there was any passage of an alarming character in the narrative. This rather put me out very often. It was a great jest of his, I recollect, to pretend that he couldn't keep his teeth from chattering, whenever mention was made of an Alguazil in connection with the adventures of Gil Blas; and I remember when Gil Blas met the captain of the robbers in Madrid, this unlucky joker counterfeited such an ague of terror that

he was overheard by Mr. Creakle, who was prowling about the passage, and handsomely flogged for disorderly conduct in the bedroom.

One day I had a visit from Mr. Peggotty and Ham, who had brought two enormous lobsters, a huge crab, and a large canvas bag of shrimps, as they "remembered I was partial to a relish with my meals."

I was proud to introduce my friend Steerforth to these kind, simple friends, and told them how good Steerforth was to me, and how he helped me with my work and took care of me, and Steerforth delighted the fishermen with his friendly, pleasant manners.

The "relish" was much appreciated by the boys at supper that night. Only poor Traddles became very ill from eating crab so late.

At last the holidays came, and I went home. The carrier, Barkis, met me at Yarmouth, and was rather gruff, which I soon found out was because he had not had any answer to his message. I promised to ask Peggotty for one.

Ah, what a strange feeling it was to be going home when it was not home, and to find that every object I looked at reminded me of the happy old home, which was like a dream I could never dream again!

God knows how infantine the memory may have been that was awakened within me by the sound of

my mother's voice in the old parlor, when I set foot in the hall.

I believed, from the solitary and thoughtful way in which my mother murmured her song, that she was alone. And I went softly into the room. She was sitting by the fire, nursing an infant, whose tiny hand she held against her neck. Her eyes were looking down upon its face, and she sat singing to it. I was so far right, that she had no other companion.

I spoke to her, and she started, and cried out. But seeing me, she called me her dear Davy, her own boy; and coming half across the room to meet me, kneeled down upon the ground and kissed me, and laid my head down on her bosom near the little creature that was nestling there, and put its hand up to my lips.

"He is your brother," said my mother, fondling me. "Davy, my pretty boy! My poor child!" Then she kissed me more and more, and clasped me round the neck. This she was doing when Peggotty came running in, and bounced down on the ground beside us and went mad about us both for a quarter of an hour.

We had a very happy afternoon the day I came. Mr. and Miss Murdstone were out, and I sat with my mother and Peggotty, and told them all about my school and Steerforth, and took the little baby in my arms and nursed it lovingly. But when the Murdstones came back I was more unhappy than ever.

I felt uncomfortable about going down to breakfast in the morning, as I had never set eyes on Mr. Murdstone since the day when I committed my memorable offense. However, as it must be done, I went down, after two or three false starts halfway, and as many runs back on tiptoe to my own room, and presented myself in the parlor.

He was standing before the fire with his back to it, while Miss Murdstone made the tea. He looked at me steadily as I entered, but made no sign of recognition whatever.

I went up to him, after a moment of confusion, and said, "I beg your pardon, sir. I am very sorry for what I did, and I hope you will forgive me."

"I am glad to hear you are sorry, David," he replied.

The hand he gave me was the hand I had bitten. I could not restrain my eye from resting for an instant on a red spot upon it.

"How do you do, ma'am?" I said to Miss Murdstone.

"Ah, dear me!" sighed Miss Murdstone, giving me the tea-caddy scoop instead of her fingers. "How long are the holidays?"

"A month, ma'am."

"Counting from when?"

"From today, ma'am."

"Oh!" said Miss Murdstone. "Then here's *one* day off."

She kept a calendar of the holidays in this way, and every morning checked a day off in exactly the same manner. She did it gloomily until she came to ten, but when she got into two figures she became more hopeful, and, as the time advanced, even jocular.

Thus the holidays lagged away, until the morning came when Miss Murdstone said,' 'Here's the last day off!" and gave me the closing cup of tea of the vacation.

I was not sorry to go. Again Mr. Barkis appeared at the gate, and again Miss Murdstone in her warning voice said, "Clara!" when my mother bent over me to bid me farewell.

I kissed her and my baby brother; it is not so much the embrace she gave me that lives in my mind, though it was as fervent as could be, as what followed the embrace.

I was in the carrier's cart when I heard her calling to me. I looked out, and she stood at the garden gate alone, holding her baby up in her arms for me to see. It was cold, still weather; and not a hair of her head, or fold of her dress, was stirred, as she looked intently at me, holding up her child.

So I lost her. So I saw her afterwards, in my sleep at school, a silent presence near my bed, looking at me with the same intent face, holding up her baby in her arms.

About two months after I had been back at school I was sent for one day to go into the parlor. I hur-

ried joyfully, for it was my birthday, and I thought it might be a hamper from Peggotty, but alas! no. It was very sad news Mrs. Creakle had to give me—my dear mamma had died! Mrs. Creakle was very kind and gentle to me, and the boys, especially Traddles, were very sorry for me.

I went home the next day, and heard that the dear baby had died too. Peggotty received me with great tenderness, and told me about my mother's illness and how she had sent a loving message to me.

"Tell my dearest boy that his mother, as she lay here, blessed him not once, but a thousand times," and she had prayed to God to protect and keep her fatherless boy.

Mr. Murdstone did not take any notice of me, nor had Miss Murdstone a word of kindness for me. Peggotty was to leave in a month, and, to my great joy, I was allowed to go with her on a visit to Mr. Peggotty. On our way I found out that the mysterious message I had given to Peggotty meant that Barkis wanted to marry her, and Peggotty had consented. Everyone in Mr. Peggotty's cottage was pleased to see me, and tried to comfort me. Little Em'ly was at school when I arrived, and I went out to meet her. I knew the way by which she would come, and presently found myself strolling along the path to meet her.

A figure appeared in the distance before long, and I soon knew it to be Em'ly, who was a little

creature still in stature, though she was grown. But when she drew nearer, and I saw her blue eyes looking bluer, and her dimpled face looking brighter, and her own self prettier and gayer, a curious feeling came over me that made me pretend not to know her, and pass by as if I were looking at something a long way off. I have done such a thing since in later life, or I am mistaken.

Little Em'ly didn't care a bit. She saw me well enough; but instead of turning round and calling after me, ran away laughing. This obliged me to run after her, and she ran so fast that we were very near the cottage before I caught her.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said little Em'ly.

"Why, you knew who it was, Em'ly," said I.

"And didn't *you* know who it was?" said Em'ly. I was going to kiss her, but she covered her cherry lips with her hands, and said she wasn't a baby now, and ran away, laughing more than ever, into the house.

She seemed to delight in teasing me, which was a change in her I wondered at very much. The tea table was ready, and our little locker was put out in its old place, but instead of coming to sit by me, she went and bestowed her company upon that grumbling Mrs. Gummidge; and on Mr. Peggotty's inquiring why, rumpled her hair all over her face to hide it, and would do nothing but laugh.

"A little puss it is!" said Mr. Peggotty, patting her with his great hand.

"Ah," said Mr. Peggotty, running his fingers through her bright curls, "here's another orphan, you see, sir, and here," giving Ham a back-handed knock in the chest, "is another of 'em, though he don't look much like it."

"If I had *you* for a guardian, Mr. Peggotty," said I, "I don't think I should *feel* much like it."

Em'ly was confused by our all observing her, and hung down her head, and her face was covered with blushes. Glancing up presently through her stray curls, and seeing that we were all looking at her still (I am sure I, for one, could have looked at her for hours), she ran away and kept away till it was nearly bedtime.

I lay down in the old little bed in the stern of the boat, and the wind came moaning on across the flat as it had done before. But I could not help fancying now that it moaned of those who were gone; and instead of thinking that the sea might rise in the night and float the boat away, I thought of the sea that had risen, since I last heard those sounds, and drowned my happy home. I recollect, as the wind and water began to sound fainter in my ears, putting a short clause into my prayers, petitioning that I might grow up to marry little Em'ly, and so dropping lovingly asleep.

During this visit Peggotty was married to Mr. Barkis, and had a nice little house of her own, and I spent the night before I was to return home in a little room in the roof.

"Young or old, Davy dear, so long as I have this house over my head," said Peggotty, "you shall find it as if I expected you here directly every minute. I shall keep it as I used to keep your old little room, my darling, and if you was to go to China you might think of its being kept just the same all the time you were away."

I felt how good and true a friend she was, and thanked her as well as I could, for they had brought me to the gate of my home, and Peggotty had me clasped in her arms.

I was poor and lonely at home, with no one near to speak a loving word, or a face to look on with love or liking, only the two persons who had broken my mother's heart. How utterly wretched and forlorn I felt! I found I was not to go back to school any more, and wandered about sad and solitary, neglected and uncared for. Peggotty's weekly visits were my only comfort. I longed to go to school, however hard a one, to be taught something anyhow, anywhere; but no one took any pains with me, and I had no friends near who could help me.

At last one day, after some weary months had passed, Mr. Murdstone told me I was to go to London and earn my own living. There was a place for me at Murdstone & Grinby's, a firm in the wine trade. My lodging and clothes would be provided for me by my stepfather, and I would earn enough for my food and pocket money. The next day I was

sent up to London with the manager, dressed in a shabby little white hat with black crepe round it for my mother, a black jacket, and hard, stiff corduroy trousers, a little fellow of ten years old, to fight my own battles with the world.

My place, I found, was one of the lowest in the firm of Murdstone & Grinby, with boys of no education and in quite an inferior station to my own; my duties were to wash the bottles, stick on labels, and so on. I was utterly miserable at being degraded in this way, when I thought of my former companions, Steerforth and Traddles, and my hopes of becoming a learned and distinguished man, and shed bitter tears, as I feared I would forget all I had learned at school. My lodging, one bare little room, was in the house of some people named Micawber, shiftless, careless, good-natured people, who were always in debt and difficulties. I felt great pity for their misfortunes and did what I could to help poor Mrs. Micawber to sell her books and other little things she could spare, to buy food for herself, her husband, and their four children. I was too young and childish to know how to provide properly for myself, and often found I was obliged to live on bread and slices of cold pudding at the end of the week.

The troubles of the Micawbers increased more and more, until at last they were obliged to leave London. I was very sad at this, for I had been with them so long that I felt they were my friends, and the

prospect of being once more utterly alone, and having to find a lodging with strangers, made me so unhappy that I determined to endure this sort of life no longer.

The last Sunday the Micawbers were in town I dined with them. I had bought a spotted horse for their little boy and a doll for the little girl, and had saved up a shilling for the poor servant girl. After I had seen them off the next morning by the coach, I wrote to Peggotty to ask her if she knew where my aunt, Miss Betsey Trotwood, lived, and to borrow half-a-guinea; for I had resolved to run away from Murdstone & Grinby's, and go to this aunt and tell her my story.

I remembered my mother's telling me of her visit when I was a baby, and that she fancied Miss Betsey had stroked her hair gently, and this memory gave me courage to appeal to her. Peggotty wrote, enclosing the half-guinea, and saying she only knew Miss Trotwood lived near Dover, but whether in that place itself or at Folkestone, Sandgate, or Hythe, she could not tell. Hearing that all these places were close together, I made up my mind to start. As I had received my week's wages in advance, I waited till the following Saturday, thinking it would not be honest to go before. I went out to look for someone to carry my box to the coach office, and the man turned out to be a thief, who not only ran off with the box, but robbed me of my half-guinea, leaving me in dire distress.

In despair, I started off to walk to Dover, and was forced to sell my waistcoat to buy some bread. The first night I found my way to my old school at Blackheath, and slept on a haystack close by, feeling some comfort in the thought that the boys were near. I knew Steerforth had left, or I would have tried to see him.

On I trudged the next day and sold my jacket at Chatham to a dreadful old man, who kept me waiting all day for the money, which was only one shilling and fourpence. I was afraid to buy anything but bread or to spend any money on a bed or a shelter for the night, and was terribly frightened by some rough tramps, who threw stones at me when I did not answer to their calls. After six days, I arrived at Dover, ragged, dusty, and half-dead with hunger and fatigue. But here, at first, I could get no tidings of my aunt, and, in despair, was going to try some of the other places Peggotty had mentioned, when the driver of a fly dropped his horsecloth, and as I was handing it up to him, I saw something kind in the man's face that encouraged me to ask if he knew where Miss Trotwood lived.

The man directed me toward some houses on the heights, and thither I toiled. Going into a little shop I inquired whether they would have the goodness to tell me where Miss Trotwood lived. I addressed myself to a man behind the counter, who was weighing some rice for a young woman; but the

latter, taking the inquiry to herself, turned round quickly.

"My mistress?" she said. "What do you want with her, boy?"

"I want," I replied, "to speak to her, if you please."

"To beg of her, you mean," retorted the damsel.

"No," I said, "indeed." But suddenly remembering that in truth I came for no other purpose, I held my peace in confusion, and felt my face burn.

My aunt's handmaid, as I supposed she was from what she had said, put her rice in a little basket and walked out of the shop; telling me that I could follow her, if I wanted to know where Miss Trotwood lived. I needed no second permission; though I was by this time in such a state of consternation and agitation, that my legs shook under me. I followed the young woman, and we soon came to a very neat little cottage with cheerful bow-windows; in front of it, a small, square, graveled court or garden full of flowers, carefully tended and smelling deliciously.

"This is Miss Trotwood's," said the young woman. "Now you know; and that's all I have got to say." With which words she hurried into the house, as if to shake off the responsibility of my appearance; and left me standing at the garden gate, looking disconsolately over the top of it toward the parlor window, where a muslin curtain, partly undrawn in the middle, a large round green

screen or fan fastened on to the window sill, a small table, and a great chair, suggested to me that my aunt might be at that moment seated in awful state.

My shoes were by this time in a woeful condition. The soles had shed themselves bit by bit, and the upper leathers had broken and burst, until the very shape and form of shoes had departed from them. My hat (which had served me for a nightcap, too) was so crushed and bent, that no old battered handleless saucepan on a dunghill need have been ashamed to vie with it. My shirt and trousers, stained with heat, dew, grass, and the Kentish soil on which I had slept, and torn besides, might have frightened the birds from my aunt's garden, as I stood at the gate. My hair had known no comb or brush since I left London. My face, neck, and hands, from unaccustomed exposure to the air and sun, were burned to a berry-brown. From head to foot I was powdered almost as white with chalk and dust as if I had come out of a limekiln. In this plight, and with a strong consciousness of it, I waited to introduce myself to, and make my first impression on, my formidable aunt.

The unbroken stillness of the parlor window leading me to infer, after a while, that she was not there, I lifted up my eyes to the window above it, where I saw a florid, pleasant-looking gentleman, with a gray head, who shut up one eye in a grotesque man-

ner, nodded his head at me several times, shook it at me as often, laughed, and went away.

I had been discomposed enough before; but I was so much the more discomposed by this unexpected behavior that I was on the point of slinking off, to think how I had best proceed, when there came out of the house a lady with a handkerchief tied over her cap, and a pair of gardening gloves on her hands, wearing a gardening pocket like a toilman's apron, and carrying a great knife. I knew her immediately to be Miss Betsey, for she came stalking out of the house exactly as my poor mother had so often described her stalking up our garden at Blunderstone Rookery.

"Go away!" said Miss Betsey, shaking her head, and making a distant chop in the air with her knife. "Go along! No boys here!"

I watched her, with my heart at my lips, as she marched to a corner of her garden, and stopped to dig up some little root there. Then, without a scrap of courage, but with a great deal of desperation, I went softly in and stood beside her, touching her with my finger.

"If you please, ma'am," I began.

She started, and looked up.

"If you please, aunt."

"Eh?" exclaimed Miss Betsey, in a tone of amazement I have never heard approached.

"If you please, aunt, I am your nephew."

"Oh, Lord!" said my aunt. And she sat flat down in the garden path.

"I am David Copperfield, of Blunderstone, in Suffolk, where you came, on the night when I was born, and saw my dear mamma. I have been very unhappy since she died. I have been slighted, and taught nothing, and thrown upon myself, and put to work not fit for me. It made me run away to you. I was robbed at first setting out, and have walked all the way, and have never slept in a bed since I began the journey." Here my self-support gave way all at once; and with a movement of my hands, intended to show her my ragged state, and call it to witness that I had suffered something, I broke into a passion of crying, which I suppose had been pent up within me all the week.

My aunt, with every sort of expression but wonder discharged from her countenance, sat on the gravel, staring at me, until I began to cry. Then she got up in a great hurry, collared me, and took me into the parlor. Her first proceeding there was to unlock a tall press, bring out several bottles, and pour some of the contents of each into my mouth. I think they must have been taken out at random, for I am sure I tasted aniseed water, anchovy sauce, and salad dressing. Then she put me on the sofa and sent the servant to ask Mr. Dick to come down. The gentleman whom I had seen at the window came in and was told by Miss Trotwood who the ragged

little object on the sofa was, and she finished by saying:

"Now here you see young David Copperfield, and the question is what shall I do with him?"

"Do with him?" answered Mr. Dick. Then, after some consideration, and looking at me, he said, "Well, if I was you I should wash him!"

Miss Trotwood was much pleased with this advice, and a warm bath was got ready at once, after which I was dressed in a shirt and trousers belonging to Mr. Dick (for Janet had burned my rags), rolled up in several shawls, and put on the sofa till dinner time, where I slept, and woke with the impression that my aunt had come and put my hair off my face, and murmured, "Pretty fellow, poor fellow."

After dinner I had to tell my story all over again to my aunt and Mr. Dick. Miss Trotwood again asked Mr. Dick's advice, and was delighted when that gentleman suggested I should be put to bed. I knelt down to say my prayers that night in a pleasant room facing the sea, and as I lay in the clean, snow-white bed I felt so grateful and comforted that I prayed earnestly I might never be homeless again, and might never forget the homeless.

The next morning my aunt told me she had written to Mr. Murdstone. I was alarmed to think that my stepfather knew where I was, and exclaimed:

"Oh, I don't know what I shall do if I have to go back to Mr. Murdstone!"

Caleb and his daughter were hard at work in the toyshop. (*See page 83.*)

"We shall see," said my aunt. My spirit sank under these words, and I became very downcast and heavy of heart.

Several anxious days went by, and at last Mr. and Miss Murdstone arrived. To Miss Betsey's great indignation, Miss Murdstone rode a donkey across the green in front of the house, and stopped at the gate. Nothing made Miss Trotwood so angry as to see donkeys on that green, and I had already seen several battles between my aunt or Janet and the donkey boys.

After driving away the donkey and the boy who had dared to bring it there, Miss Trotwood received her visitors. She kept me near her, fenced in with a chair.

Mr. Murdstone told Miss Betsey that I was a very bad, stubborn, violent-tempered boy, whom he had tried without success to improve, and that he had put me in a respectable business from which I had run away. If Miss Trotwood chose to protect and encourage me now, she must do it always, for he had come to fetch me away there and then, and if I was not ready to come, and Miss Trotwood did not wish to give me up to be dealt with exactly as Mr. Murdstone liked, he would cast me off for always, and have no more to do with me.

"Are you ready to go, David?" asked my aunt.

But I answered no, and begged and prayed her for my father's sake to befriend and protect me, for

neither Mr. nor Miss Murdstone had ever liked me or been kind to me and had made my mamma, who always loved me dearly, very unhappy about me, and I had been very miserable.

"Mr. Dick," said Miss Trotwood, "what shall I do with this child?"

Mr. Dick considered. "Have him measured for a suit of clothes directly."

"Mr. Dick," said Miss Trotwood, "your common sense is invaluable."

Then she pulled me toward her, and said to Mr. Murdstone:

"You can go when you like. I'll take my chance with the boy. If he's all you say he is, I can at least do as much for him as you have done. But I don't believe a word of it."

Then she told Mr. Murdstone what she thought of the way he had treated me and my mother, which did not make that gentleman feel very comfortable, and finished by turning to Miss Murdstone and saying:

"Good day to you, too, ma'am, and if I ever see you ride a donkey across my green again, as sure as you have a head upon your shoulders I'll knock your bonnet off and tread upon it!"

This startled Miss Murdstone so much that she went off quietly with her brother, while I, overjoyed, threw my arms round my aunt's neck, and kissed and thanked her with great heartiness.

Some clothes were bought for me that same day and marked "Trotwood Copperfield," for my aunt wished to call me by her name.

Thus I began my new life, in a new name, and with everything new about me. Now that the state of doubt was over, I felt, for many days, like one in a dream. I never thought that I had a curious couple of guardians in my aunt and Mr. Dick. I never thought of anything about myself, distinctly. The two things clearest in my mind were, that a remoteness had come upon the old Blunderstone life, which seemed to lie in the haze of an immeasurable distance; and that a curtain had forever fallen on my life at Murdstone & Grinby's. No one has ever raised that curtain since. I have lifted it for a moment, even in this narrative, with a reluctant hand, and dropped it gladly. The remembrance of that life is fraught with so much pain to me, with so much mental suffering and want of hope, that I have never had the courage even to examine how long I was doomed to lead it. Whether it lasted for a year, or more, or less, I do not know. I only know that it was, and ceased to be; and that I have written, and there I leave it.

—*David Copperfield*

IN a poor quarter of London in an out-of-the-way street was a row of quiet little houses. Before one of these, on a certain autumn evening, two persons paused in their walk. Of these, one was a lad of seventeen or eighteen; the other, a man perhaps ten years his senior.

The boy knocked at a door, and the door promptly opened with a spring and a click. A parlor door within a small entry stood open, and disclosed a child—a dwarf—a girl—a something—sitting on a little low old-fashioned armchair, which had a kind of little working bench before it.

"I can't get up," said the child, "because my back's bad, and my legs are queer. But I'm the person of the house."

"Who else is at home?" asked Charley Hexam, staring.

"Nobody's at home at present," returned the child, with a glib assertion of her dignity, "except the person of the house. What did you want, young man?"

"I wanted to see my sister."

"Many young men have sisters," returned the child. "Give me your name, young man."

The queer little figure, and the queer but not ugly little face, with its bright gray eyes, were so sharp, that the sharpness of the manner seemed unavoidable. As if, being turned out of that mold, it must be sharp.

"Hexam is my name."

"Ah, indeed?" said the person of the house. "I thought it might be. Your sister will be in in about a quarter of an hour. I am very fond of your sister. She's my particular friend. Take a seat. And this gentleman's name?"

"Mr. Headstone, my schoolmaster."

"Take a seat. And would you please to shut the street door first? I can't very well do it myself, because my back's so bad, and my legs are so queer."

They complied in silence, and the little figure went on with its work of gumming or gluing together with a camel's-hair brush certain pieces of cardboard and thin wood, previously cut into various shapes. The scissors and knives upon the bench showed that the child herself had cut them; and the bright scraps of velvet and silk and ribbon also strewn upon the bench showed that when duly stuffed (and stuffing, too, was there), she was to cover them smartly. The dexterity of her nimble fingers was remarkable, and, as she brought two thin edges accurately together by giving them a little bite, she would glance at the visitors out of the corners of her

gray eyes with a look that out-sharpened all her other sharpness.

"You can't tell me the name of my trade, I'll be bound," she said, after taking several of these observations.

"You make pincushions," said Charley.

"What else do I make?"

"Penwipers," said Bradley Headstone.

"Ha! ha! What else do I make? You're a schoolmaster, but you can't tell me."

"You do something," he returned, pointing to a corner of the little bench, "with straw; but I don't know what."

"Well done, you!" cried the person of the house. "I only make pincushions and penwipers to use up my waste. But my straw really does belong to my business. Try again. What do I make with my straw?"

"Dinner mats."

"A schoolmaster, and says dinner mats! I'll give you a clue to my trade, in a game of forfeits. I love my love with a B because she's Beautiful; I hate my love with a B because she is Brazen; I took her to the sign of the Blue Boar, and I treated her with Bonnets; her name's Bouncer, and she lives in Bedlam. Now, what do I make with my straw?"

"Ladies' bonnets?"

"Fine ladies'," said the person of the house, nodding assent. "Dolls'. I'm a Dolls' Dressmaker."

A queer little figure, sitting in a chair

"I hope it's a good business?"

The person of the house shrugged her shoulders and shook her head. "No. Poorly paid. And I'm often so pressed for time! I had a doll married, last week, and was obliged to work all night. And it's not good for me, on account of my back being so bad and my legs so queer."

They looked at the little creature with a wonder that did not diminish, and the schoolmaster said, "I am sorry your fine ladies are so inconsiderate."

"It's the way with them," said the person of the house, shrugging her shoulders again. "And they take no care of their clothes, and they never keep to the same fashions a month. I work for a doll with three daughters. Bless you, she's enough to ruin her husband!"

The person of the house gave a weird little laugh here, and gave them another look out of the corners of her eyes. She had an elfin chin that was capable of great expression; and whenever she gave this look, she hitched this chin up, as if her eyes and her chin worked together on the same wires.

"Are you always as busy as you are now?"

"Busier. I'm slack just now. I finished a large mourning order the day before yesterday. Doll I work for lost a canary bird." The person of the house gave another little laugh, and then nodded her head several times, as one who should moralize, "Oh, this world, this world!"

"Are you alone all day?" asked Bradley Headstone. "Don't any of the neighboring children—?"

"Ah, lud!" cried the person of the house, with a little scream, as if the word had pricked her. "Don't talk of children. I can't bear children. I know their tricks and their manners." She said this with an angry little shake of her right fist close before her eyes.

Perhaps it scarcely required the teacher habit to perceive that the doll's dressmaker was inclined to be bitter on the difference between herself and other children. But both master and pupil understood it so.

"Always running about and screeching, always playing and fighting, always skip-skip-skipping on the pavement and chalking it for their games! Oh! I know their tricks and their manners!" shaking the little fist as before. "And that's not all. Ever so often calling names in through a person's keyhole, and imitating a person's back and legs. Oh! I know their tricks and their manners. And I'll tell you what I'd do to punish 'em. There's doors under the church in the Square—black doors, leading into black vaults. Well! I'd open one of those doors, and I'd cram 'em all in, and then I'd lock the door and through the keyhole I'd blow in pepper."

"What would be the good of blowing in pepper?" asked Charley Hexam.

"To set 'em sneezing," said the person of the house, "and make their eyes water. And when they

were all sneezing and inflamed, I'd mock 'em through the keyhole. Just as they, with their tricks and their manners, mock a person through a person's keyhole!"

An uncommonly emphatic shake of her little fist close before her eyes seemed to ease the mind of the person of the house; for she added with recovered composure, "No, no, no. No children for me. Give me grown-ups."

It was difficult to guess the age of this strange creature, for her poor figure furnished no clue to it, and her face was at once so young and so old. Twelve, or at the most thirteen, might be near the mark.

"I always did like grown-ups," she went on, "and always kept company with them. So sensible. Sit so quiet. Don't go prancing and capering about! And I mean always to keep among none but grown-ups till I marry. I suppose I must make up my mind to marry, one of these days."

She listened to a step outside that caught her ear, and there was a soft knock at the door. Pulling at a handle within her reach, she said with a pleased laugh, "Now here, for instance, is a grown-up that's my particular friend!" and Lizzie Hexam, in a black dress, entered the room.

"Charley! You!"

Taking him to her arms in the old way, of which he seemed a little ashamed, she saw no one else.

"There, there, there, Liz, all right, my dear. See! Here's Mr. Headstone come with me."

Her eyes met those of the schoolmaster, who had evidently expected to see a very different sort of person, and a murmured word or two of salutation passed between them. She was a little flurried by the unexpected visit, and the schoolmaster was not at his ease. But he never was, quite.

"I told Mr. Headstone you were not settled, Liz, but he was so kind as to take an interest in coming, and so I brought him. How well you look!"

Bradley seemed to think so.

"Ah! Don't she, don't she?" cried the person of the house, resuming her occupation, though the twilight was falling fast. "I believe you she does! But go on with your chat, one and all:

'You one two three,
My com-pa-nie,
And don't mind me'";

pointing this impromptu rime with three points of her thin forefinger.

"I didn't expect a visit from you, Charley," said his sister. "I supposed that if you wanted to see me you would have sent to me, appointing me to come somewhere near the school, as I did last time. I saw my brother near the school, sir," to Bradley Headstone, "because it's easier for me to go there, than for him to come here. I work about midway between the two places."

"You don't see much of one another," said Bradley, not improving in respect of ease.

"No," with a rather sad shake of her head. "Charley always does well, Mr. Headstone?"

"He could not do better. I regard his course as quite plain before him."

"I hoped so. I am so thankful. So well done of you, Charley dear! It is better for me not to come (except when he wants me) between him and his prospects. You think so, Mr. Headstone?"

Conscious that his pupil-teacher was looking for his answer, and that he himself had suggested the boy's keeping aloof from this sister, now seen for the first time face to face, Bradley Headstone stammered:

"Your brother is very much occupied, you know. He has to work hard. One cannot but say that the less his attention is diverted from his work, the better for his future. When he shall have established himself why then—it will be another thing then."

Lizzie shook her head again, and returned, with a quiet smile, "I always advised him as you advise him. Did I not, Charley?"

"Well, never mind that now," said the boy. "How are you getting on?"

"Very well, Charley. I want for nothing."

"You have your own room here?"

"Oh, yes. Upstairs. And it's quiet, and pleasant, and airy."

"And she always has the use of this room for visitors," said the person of the house, screwing up one of her little bony fists, like an operaglass, and looking through it, with her eyes and her chin in that quaint accordance. "Always this room for visitors; haven't you Lizzie, dear?"

"I'll saunter on by the river," said Bradley. "You will be glad to talk together."

So the three walked for a while by the river. Then Lizzie bade the others good night and went back to the little house and the tiny doll's dressmaker.

The person of the house, doll's dressmaker and manufacturer of ornamental pincushions and pen-wipers, sat in her quaint little low armchair, singing in the dark, until Lizzie came back. The person of the house had attained that dignity while yet of very tender years indeed, through being the only trustworthy person in the house.

"Well, Lizzie-Mizzie-Wizzie," said she, breaking off in her song. "What's the news out of doors?"

"What's the news indoors?" returned Lizzie, playfully smoothing the bright, long, fair hair which grew very luxuriant and beautiful on the head of the doll's dressmaker.

"'Let me see,' said the blind man. Why, the last news is that I don't mean to marry your brother."

"No?"

"No-o," shaking her head and her chin. "Don't like the boy."

"What do you say to his master?"

"I say that I think he's bespoke."

Lizzie finished putting the hair carefully back over the misshapen shoulders, and then lighted a candle. It showed the little parlor to be dingy, but orderly and clean. She stood the candle on the mantelshelf, remote from the dressmaker's eyes, and then put the room door open, and the house door open, and turned the little low chair and its occupant toward the outer air. It was a sultry night, and this was a fine-weather arrangement when the day's work was done. To complete it, she seated herself in a chair by the side of the little chair, and protectingly drew under her arm the spare hand that crept up to her.

"This is what your loving Jenny Wren calls the best time in the day and night," said the person of the house. Her real name was Fanny Cleaver; but she had long ago chosen to bestow upon herself the appellation of Miss Jenny Wren.

"I have been thinking," Jenny went on, "as I sat at work today, what a thing it would be if I should be able to have your company till I am married, or at least courted. When I am courted, I shall make him do some of the things that you do for me. He couldn't brush my hair as you do, or help me up and down stairs as you do, and he couldn't do anything as you do; but he could take my work home, and he could call for

orders in his clumsy way. And he shall, too. I'll trot him about, I can tell him!"

Jenny Wren had her personal vanities, happily for her, and no intentions were stronger in her breast than the various trials and torments that were, in the fulness of time, to be inflicted upon "him."

"Wherever he may happen to be just at present, or whoever he may happen to be," said Miss Wren, "I know his tricks and his manners, and I give him warning to look out."

"Don't you think you are rather hard upon him?" asked her friend, smiling, and smoothing her hair.

"Not a bit," replied the sage Miss Wren, with an air of vast experience. "My dear, they don't care for you, those fellows, if you're not hard upon 'em. But I was saying if I should be able to have your company. Ah! What a large If! Ain't it?"

"I have no intention of parting company, Jenny."

"Don't say that, or you'll go directly."

"Am I so little to be relied upon?"

"You're more to be relied on than silver and gold." As Jenny said these words there came strolling along a gentleman, Eugene Wrayburn by name, who had been able to do some small kindnesses for them. In the conversation that followed, Jenny said, in a musing tone, "I wonder how it happens that when I am at work, work, working here all alone in the summer time, I smell flowers?"

"Isn't it," inquired Mr. Wrayburn, "because you do smell flowers?"

"No, I don't," said the little creature, resting one arm upon that hand, and looking vacantly before her, "this is not a flowery neighborhood. It's anything but that. And yet, as I sit at work, I smell miles of flowers. I smell roses till I think I see the rose leaves lying in heaps, bushels, on the floor. I smell fallen leaves till I put down my hand—so—and expect to make them rustle. I smell the white and the pink May in the hedges, and all sorts of flowers that I never was among, for I have seen very few flowers, indeed, in my life."

"Pleasant fancies to have, Jenny dear!" said her friend, with a glance toward Eugene as if she would have asked him whether they were given the child in compensation for her losses.

"So I think, Lizzie, when they come to me. And the birds I hear! Oh!" cried the little creature, holding out her hand and looking upward, "how they sing!"

There was something in the face and action for the moment quite inspired and beautiful. Then the chin dropped musingly upon the hand again.

"I dare say my birds sing better than other birds, and my flowers smell better than other flowers. For when I was a little child," in a tone as though it were ages ago, "the children that I used to see early in the morning were very different from any others that I ever saw.

"They were not like me: they were not chilled, anxious, ragged, or beaten; they were never in pain. They were not like the children of the neighbors; they never made me tremble all over, by setting up shrill noises, and they never mocked me. Such numbers of them, too! All in white dresses, and with something shining on the borders, and on their heads, that I have never been able to imitate with my work, though I know it so well.

"They used to come down in long bright slanting rows, and say all together, 'Who is this in pain! Who is this in pain!' When I told them who it was, they answered, 'Come and play with us!' When I said, 'I never play! I can't play!' they swept about me and took me up, and made me light. Then it was all delicious ease and rest till they laid me down, and said, all together, 'Have patience, and we will come again.'

"Whenever they came back, I used to know they were coming before I saw the long bright rows, by hearing them ask, all together a long way off, 'Who is this in pain! Who is this in pain!' And I used to cry out, 'O my blessed children, it's poor me. Have pity on me. Take me up and make me light!'"

By degrees, as she progressed in this remembrance, the hand was raised, the late ecstatic look returned, and she became quite beautiful. Having so paused for a moment, silent, with a listening

smile upon her face, she looked round and recalled herself.

In a few moments, Mr. Wrayburn bid them good night and pursued his way homeward.

Some weeks later, on a very foggy evening, an old man in a long coat and a broad-brimmed hat came slowly along to the door step of the doll's dressmaker. Miss Wren expected him. He could see her through the window by the light of her low fire, carefully banked up with damp cinders that it might last the longer and waste the less when she went out, sitting waiting for him in her bonnet. His tap at the glass roused her from the musing solitude in which she sat, and she came to the door to open it; aiding her steps with a little crutch stick.

"Good evening, godmother!" said Miss Jenny Wren.

The old man laughed, and gave her his arm to lean on.

"Won't you come in and warm yourself, godmother?" asked Miss Jenny Wren.

"Not if you are ready, Cinderella, my dear."

"Well!" exclaimed Miss Wren, delighted. "Now you are a clever old boy! If we gave prizes at this establishment (but we only keep blanks), you should have the first silver medal, for taking me up so quick." As she spake thus, Miss Wren removed the key of the house door from the keyhole and put it in her pocket, and then bustlingly closed the door,

and tried it as they both stood on the step. Satisfied that her dwelling was safe, she drew one hand through the old man's arm and prepared to ply her crutch stick with the other. But the key was an instrument of such gigantic proportions that before they started Riah proposed to carry it.

"No, no, no! I'll carry it myself," returned Miss Wren. "I'm awfully lopsided, you know, and stowed down in my pocket it'll trim the ship. To let you into a secret, godmother, I wear my pocket on my high side o'purpose."

With that they began their plodding through the fog.

"Yes, it was truly sharp of you, godmother," resumed Miss Wren with great approbation, "to understand me. But, you see, you are so like the fairy godmother in the bright little books! You look so unlike the rest of people, and so much as if you had changed yourself into that shape, just this moment, with some benevolent object. Boh!" cried Miss Jenny, putting her face close to the old man's, "I can see your features, godmother, behind the beard."

"Does the fancy go to my changing other objects, too, Jenny?"

"Ah! That it does! If you'd only borrow my stick and tap this piece of pavement—this dirty stone that my foot taps—it would start up a coach and six. I say! Let's believe so!"

"With all my heart," replied the good old man. "What else will you have, my dear?" asked the old man in a compassionately playful voice.

"Upon my word, godmother, I am afraid I must be selfish next, and get you to set me right in the back and the legs. I'ts a little thing to you with your power, godmother, but it's a great deal to poor, weak, aching me."

There was no querulous complaining in the words, but they were none the less touching for that.

"And then?"

"Yes, and then—you know, godmother. We'll both jump into the coach and six and go to Lizzie. (Lizzie was living now in a distant town.) This reminds me, godmother, to ask you a serious question. You are as wise as wise can be (having been brought up by the fairies), and you can tell me this: Is it better to have had a good thing and lost it, or never to have had it?"

"Explain, goddaughter."

"I feel so much more solitary and helpless without Lizzie now, than I used to feel before I knew her." (Tears were in her eyes as she said so.)

"Some beloved companionship fades out of most lives, my dear," said the Jew, "that of a wife, and a fair daughter, and a son of promise, has faded out of my own life, but the happiness was."

"Ah!" said Miss Wren thoughtfully, by no means convinced, and chopping the exclamation with that

sharp little hatchet of hers. "Then I tell you what change I think you had better begin with, godmother. You had better change Is into Was and Was into Is, and keep them so."

"Would that suit your case? Would you not be always in pain then?" asked the old man tenderly.

"Right!" exclaimed Miss Wren with another chop. "You have changed me wiser, godmother. Not," she added with the quaint hitch of her chin and eyes, "that you need be a very wonderful godmother to do that deed."

Thus conversing, and having crossed Westminster Bridge, they traversed the ground that Riah had lately traversed, and new ground likewise; for, when they had recrossed the Thames by way of London Bridge, they struck down by the river and held their still foggier course that way.

But previously, as they were going along, Jenny twisted her venerable friend aside to a brilliantly lighted toy-shop window, and said, "Now look at 'em. All my work!"

This referred to a dazzling semicircle of dolls in all the colors of the rainbow, who were dressed for presentation at court, for going to balls, for going out driving, for going out on horseback, for going out walking, for going to get married, for going to help other dolls to get married, for all the gay events of life.

"Pretty, pretty, pretty!" said the old man with a clap of his hands. "Most elegant taste."

"Glad you like 'em," returned Miss Wren, loftily. "But the fun is, godmother, how I make the great ladies try my dresses on, though it's the hardest part of my business, and would be, even if my back were not bad and my legs queer."

He looked at her as not understanding what she said.

"Bless you, godmother," said Miss Wren, "I have to scud about town at all hours. If it was only sitting at my bench, cutting out and sewing, it would be comparatively easy work; but it's the trying on by the great ladies that takes it out of me."

"How, the trying on?" asked Riah.

"What a mooney godmother you are, after all!" returned Miss Wren. "Look here. There's a drawing-room, or a grand day in the park, or a show, or a fête or what you like. Very well. I squeeze among the crowd, and I look about me. When I see a great lady very suitable for my business, I say, 'You'll do, my dear!' and I take particular notice of her, and run home and cut her out and baste her. Then another day, I come scudding back again to try on, and then I take particular notice of her again. Sometimes she plainly seems to say, 'How that little creature is staring!' and sometimes likes it and sometimes don't, but much more often yes than no. All the time I am only saying to myself, 'I must

hollow out a bit here; I must slope away there'; and I am making a perfect slave of her, with making her try on my doll's dress.

"Evening parties are severer work for me, because there's only a doorway for a full view, and what with hobbling among the wheels of the carriages and the legs of the horses, I fully expect to be run over some night. However, there I have 'em, just the same. When they go bobbing into the hall from the carriage, and catch a glimpse of my little physiognomy poked out from behind a policeman's cape in the rain, I dare say they think I am wondering and admiring with all my eyes and heart, but they little think they're only working for my doll!

"There was Lady Belinda Whitrose. I made her do double duty in one night. I said when she came out of the carriage, 'You'll do, my dear!' and I ran straight home and cut her out and basted her. Back I came again, and waited behind the men that called the carriages. Very bad night too. At last 'Lady Belinda Whitrose's carriage! Lady Belinda Whitrose coming down!' And I made her try on, oh! and take pains about it too, before she got seated. That's Lady Belinda hung up by the waist, much too near the gaslight for a wax one, with her toes turned in."

When they had plodded on for some time nigh the river, Riah asked the way to a certain tavern which was called the Six Jolly Fellowship Porters.

Following the directions he received, they arrived, after two or three puzzled stoppages for consideration, and some uncertain looking about them, at the door of Miss Abbey Potterson's dominions. A peep through the glass portion of the door revealed to them the glories of the bar, and Miss Abbey herself seated in state on her snug throne, reading the newspaper. To her, with deference, they presented themselves.

Taking her eyes off her newspaper, and pausing with a suspended expression of countenance, as if she must finish the paragraph in hand before undertaking any other business whatever, Miss Abbey demanded, with some slight asperity, "Now then, what's for you?"

"Could we see Miss Potterson?" asked the old man, uncovering his head.

"You not only could, but you can and you do," replied the hostess.

"Might we speak with you, madam?"

By this time Miss Abbey's eyes had possessed themselves of the small figure of Miss Jenny Wren, for the closer observation of which Miss Abbey laid aside her newspaper, rose, and looked over the half door of the bar. The crutch stick seemed to entreat for its owner leave to come in and rest by the fire; so Miss Abbey opened the half door, and said, as though replying to the crutch stick, "Yes, come in and rest by the fire."

"My name is Riah," said the old man, with courteous action, "and my avocation is in London city. This, my young companion—"

"Stop a bit," interposed Miss Wren. "I'll give the lady my card." She produced it from her pocket with an air, after struggling with the gigantic door-key which had got upon the top of it and kept it down. Miss Abbey, with manifest tokens of astonishment, took the diminutive document, and found it to run concisely thus:

MISS JENNY WREN
Dolls' Dressmaker
Dolls attended at their own residences

"Lud!" exclaimed Miss Potterson, staring. And dropped the card.

"We take the liberty of coming, my young companion and I, madam," said Riah, "on behalf of Lizzie Hexam."

Their errand was to carry a message from Lizzie to Miss Potterson, who had befriended Lizzie when her father died. They rested there for a little time and then set out for home, carrying a pleasant friendly message to Lizzie from Miss Potterson.

—*Our Mutual Friend*

MY father's family name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip. So I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip.

I give Pirrip as my father's family name, on the authority of his tombstone and my sister—Mrs. Jo Gargery, who married the blacksmith. As I never saw my father or my mother, and never saw any likeness of either of them (for their days were long before the days of photographs), my first fancies regarding what they were like were unreasonably derived from their tombstones. The shape of the letters on my father's gave me an odd idea that he was a square, stout, dark man with curly, black hair. From the character and turn of the inscription, "*also Georgiana wife of the above,*" I drew a childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and sickly.

Ours was the marsh country, down by the river, within, as the river wound, twenty miles of the sea. My first distinct impression of the identity of things seems to me to have been gained on a memorable raw, damp afternoon toward evening. At such a

time I found out for certain that this bleak place overgrown with nettles was the churchyard; and that Tobias Pirrip, late of this Parish, and also Georgiana, wife of the above, were dead and buried; and that the dark, flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dikes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that the low leaden line beyond was the river; and that the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing, was the sea; and that the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip.

"Hold your noise!" cried a terrible voice, as a man started up from among the graves at the side of the church porch. "Hold your noise, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat!"

A fearful man, all in gray, with a great iron on his leg. A man with no hat, and broken shoes, and with an old rag tied round his head. A man who had been soaked in water and smothered in mud, and lamed by stones, and cut by flints, and stung by nettles, and torn by briars; who limped, and shivered, and glared, and growled; and whose teeth chattered in his head as he seized me by the chin.

"Don't cut my throat, sir!" I pleaded in terror. "Pray don't do it, sir!"

"Tell us your name!" said the man. "Quick!"

"Pip, sir."

"Once more," said the man. "Give it mouth!"

"Pip. Pip, sir."

"Show us where you live," said the man. "Pint out the place!"

I pointed to where our village lay on the flat inshore among the alder trees and pollards, a mile or more from the church.

The man, after looking at me for a moment, turned me upside down, and emptied my pockets. There was nothing in them but a piece of bread. When the church came to itself—for he was so sudden and strong that he made it go head over heels before me, and I saw the steeple under my legs—when the church came to itself, I say, I was seated on a high tombstone trembling, while he ate the bread ravenously.

"You young dog!" said the man, licking his lips at me, "what fat cheeks you ha' got!"

I believe they were fat, though I was at that time undersized for my years, and not strong.

"Damned if I couldn't eat 'em," said the man, with a threatening shake of his head, "and if I han't half a mind to 't!"

I earnestly expressed my hope that he wouldn't, and held tighter to the tombstone on which he had put me; partly to keep myself upon it, partly to keep myself from crying.

"Now then, lookie here!" said the man. "Where's your mother?"

"There, sir!" said I.

He started, made a short run, and stopped and looked over his shoulder.

"There, sir!" I timidly explained. "Also Georgiana. That's my mother."

"Oho!" said he, coming back. "And is that your father alonger your mother?"

"Yes, sir," said I; "him too; late of this parish."

"Ha!" he muttered then, considering. "Who d'ye live with, supposin' you're kindly let to live, which I han't made up my mind about?"

"My sister, sir, Mrs. Jo Gargery, wife of Jo Gargery, the blacksmith, sir."

"Blacksmith, eh?" said he, and looked down at his leg.

After darkly looking at his leg and at me several times, he came closer to my tombstone, took me by both arms, and tilted me back as far as he could hold me, so that his eyes looked most powerfully down into mine, and mine looked most helplessly up into his.

"Now lookie here," he said, "the question being whether you're to be let to live. You know what a file is?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you know what wittles is?"

"Yes, sir."

After each question he tilted me over a little more, so as to give me a greater sense of helplessness and danger.

"You get me a file." He tilted me again. "And you get me wittles." He tilted me again. "You bring 'em both to me." He tilted me again. "Or I'll have your heart and liver out." He tilted me again.

I was dreadfully frightened, and so giddy that I clung to him with both hands, and said, "If you would kindly please to let me keep upright, sir, perhaps I shouldn't be sick, and perhaps I could attend more."

He gave me a most tremendous dip and roll, so that the church jumped over its own weathercock. Then he held me by the arms, in an upright position on the top of the stone, and went on in these fearful terms:

"You bring me, tomorrow morning early, that file, and them wittles. You bring the lot to me at that old Battery over yonder. You do this, and you never dare to say a word, or dare to make a sign concerning your haven't seen such a person as me, or any person, and you shall be let to live. Now, what do you say?"

I said that I would get him the file, and I would get him what broken bits of food I could, and I would come to him at the Battery, early in the morning.

"Say Lord strike you dead if you don't?" said the man.

I said so, and he took me down

"Now," he pursued, "you remember what you've undertook, and you get home!"

"Goo-good night, sir," I faltered.

"Much of that!" said he, glancing about him over the cold, wet flat. "I wish I was a frog, or a eel!"

At the same time he hugged his shuddering body in both his arms—clasping himself, as if to hold himself together—and limped toward the low church wall.

When he reached it, he got over it, like a man whose legs were numbed and stiff, and then turned round to look for me. When I saw him turning, I set my face toward home, and made the best use of my legs. But presently I looked over my shoulder, and saw him going on again toward the river, still hugging himself in both arms, and picking his way with his sore feet among the great stones dropped into the marshes here and there, for stepping places when the rains were heavy, or the tide was in.

The marshes were just a long, black, horizontal line then, as I stopped to look after him; and the river was just another horizontal line not nearly so broad nor yet so black; and the sky was just a row of long, angry red lines, and dense, black lines intermixed. On the edge of the river I could faintly make out the only two black things in all the prospect that seemed to be standing upright; one of these was the beacon by which the sailors steered, like an un-

hooped cask upon a pole, an ugly, slimy thing when you were near it; the other, a gibbet with some chains hanging to it which had once held a pirate. The man was limping on toward this latter, as if he were the pirate coming to life and come down, and going back to hook himself up again. It gave me a terrible turn when I thought so; and as I saw the black cattle lifting their heads to gaze after him, I wondered whether they thought so too. I looked all around for the horrible young man, and could see no signs of him. But now I was frightened again, and ran home without stopping.

CHAPTER II

My sister, Mrs. Jo Gargery, was more than twenty years older than I, and had established a great reputation with herself and the neighbors because she had brought me up "by hand." Having at that time to find out for myself what the expression meant, and knowing her to have a hard and heavy hand, and to be much in the habit of laying it upon her husband, as well as upon me, I supposed that Jo Gargery and I were both brought up by hand.

She was not a good-looking woman, my sister; and I had a general impression that she must have made Jo Gargery marry her by hand. Jo was a fair man, with curls of flaxen hair on each side of his

Paul spent the greater part of the day at the beach with Florence as his only companion. (*See page 201.*)

smooth face, and eyes of such a very undecided blue that they seemed to have somehow got mixed with their own whites. He was a mild, good-natured, sweet-tempered, easy-going, foolish, dear fellow—a sort of Hercules in strength, and also in weakness.

My sister, Mrs. Jo, with black hair and eyes, had such a prevailing redness of skin that I sometimes used to wonder whether it was possible she washed herself with a nutmeg grater instead of soap. She was tall and bony, and almost always wore a coarse apron, fastened over her figure behind with two loops, and having a square, impregnable bit in front that was stuck full of pins and needles. She made it a powerful merit in herself, and a strong reproach against Jo, that she wore this apron so much. Though I really see no reason now why she should have worn it at all; or why, if she did wear it at all, she should not have taken it off every day of her life.

Jo's forge adjoined our house, which was a wooden house, as many of the dwellings in our country were—most of them, at that time. When I ran home from the churchyard, the forge was shut up, and Jo was sitting alone in the kitchen. Jo and I being fellow sufferers, and having confidence as such, Jo imparted a confidence to me the moment I raised the latch of the door and peeped in at him opposite to it, sitting in the chimney corner.

"Mrs. Jo has been out a dozen times, looking for you, Pip; and she's out now, making it a baker's dozen."

"Is she?"

"Yes, Pip," said Jo, "and what's worse, she's got Tickler with her."

At this dismal intelligence I twisted the only button on my waistcoat round and round, and looked in great depression at the fire. Tickler was a wax-ended piece of cane, worn smooth by collision with my tickled frame.

"She sat down," said Jo, "and she got up, and she made a grab at Tickler, and she rampaged out. That's what she did," said Jo, slowly clearing the fire between the bars with the poker; "she rampaged out, Pip."

"Has she been gone long, Jo?" I always treated him as a larger species of child, and as no more than my equal.

"Well," said Jo, looking up at the Dutch clock, "she's been on the rampage, this last spell, about five minutes, Pip. She's a coming! Get behind the door, old chap, and have the jacktowel betwixt you."

I took the advice. My sister, Mrs. Jo, throwing the door wide open, and finding an obstruction behind it, immediately divined the cause, and applied Tickler to further investigation. Then Jo, glad to get hold of me on any terms, passed me on into the chimney and fenced me there with his great legs.

"Where have you been, you young monkey?" said Mrs. Jo, stamping her foot. "Tell me directly what you've been doing to wear me away with fret and fright and worrit, or I'd have you out of that corner if you was fifty Pips and he was five hundred Gargerys."

"I have only been to the churchyard," said I, from my stool, crying and rubbing myself.

"Churchyard!" repeated my sister. "If it warn't for me you'd have been to the churchyard long ago, and stayed there. Who brought you up by hand?"

"You did," said I.

"And why did I do it, I should like to know!" exclaimed my sister.

I whimpered, "I don't know."

"*I* don't!" said my sister. "I'd never do it again! I know that. I may truly say I've never had this apron of mine off since born you were. It's bad enough to be a blacksmith's wife (and him a Gargery), without being your mother."

My thoughts strayed from that question as I looked disconsolately at the fire. For the fugitive out on the marshes with the ironed leg, the file, the victuals, and the dreadful pledge I was under to commit a larceny on those sheltering premises, rose before me in the avenging coals.

"Hah!" said Mrs. Jo, restoring Tickler to his station. "Churchyard, indeed! You may well say churchyard, you two." One of us, by the by, had

not said it at all. "You'll drive *me* to the churchyard betwixt you one of these days, and oh, a pr-r-recious pair you'd be without me!"

As she applied herself to set the tea things, Jo peeped down at me over his leg, as if he were mentally casting me and himself up, and calculating what kind of pair we practically should make, under the grievous circumstances foreshadowed. After that, he sat feeling his right-side flaxen curls and whisker, and following Mrs. Jo about with his blue eyes, as his manner always was at squally times.

My sister had a trenchant way of cutting our bread-and-butter for us, that never varied. First, with her left hand she held the loaf, hard and fast, against her bib, where it sometimes got a pin into it, and sometimes a needle, which we afterward got into our mouths. Then she took some butter (not too much) on a knife and spread it on the loaf in an apothecary kind of way, as if she were making a plaster—using both sides of the knife with a slapping dexterity, and trimming and molding the butter off round the crust. Then she gave the knife a final smart wipe on the edge of the plaster, and then sawed a very thick round off the loaf, which she finally, before separating from the loaf, hewed into two halves: of which Jo got one, and I the other.

On the present occasion, though I was hungry, I dared not eat my slice. I felt that I must have something in reserve for my dreadful acquaintance.

Pip watches the cutting of the loaf

I knew Mrs. Jo's housekeeping to be of the strictest kind, and that my larcenous researches in the dead of night might find nothing available in the safe; therefore I resolved to put my hunk of bread and butter down the leg of my trousers.

The effort of resolution necessary to the achievement of this purpose I found to be quite awful. It was as if I had to make up my mind to leap from the top of a high house, or plunge into a great depth of water. And it was made the more difficult by the unconscious Jo. In our above-mentioned freemasonry as fellow sufferers, and in his good-natured companionship with me, it was our evening habit to compare the way we bit through our slices by silently holding them up to each other's admiration now and then—which in general led us to new exertions. To-night Jo several times invited me, by the display of his fast-diminishing slice, to enter upon our usual friendly competition; but he found me each time with my yellow mug of tea on one knee, and my untouched bread and butter on the other. At last, I desperately considered that the thing I contemplated must be done, and that it had best be done in the least improbable manner consistent with the circumstances. I took advantage of a moment when Jo had just looked aside, and got my bread and butter down my leg.

Conscience is a dreadful thing when it accuses man or boy; but when, in the case of a boy, that

secret burden cooperates with another secret burden down the leg of his trousers, it is (as I can testify) a great punishment. The guilty knowledge that I was going to rob Mrs. Jo—I never thought I was going to rob Jo, for I never thought of any of the housekeeping property as his—united to the necessity of always keeping one hand on the bread and butter as I sat, or when I was ordered about the kitchen on any small errand, almost drove me out of my mind. Then, as the March winds made the fire glow and flare, I thought I heard the fierce voice outside of the man with the iron on his leg who had sworn me to secrecy, declaring that he couldn't and wouldn't starve until tomorrow, but must be fed now. If ever anybody's hair stood on end with terror, mine must have done so then. But, perhaps, nobody's ever did?

It was Christmas eve, and I had to stir the pudding for next day, with the copper stick, from seven to eight by the Dutch clock. I tried it with the load upon my leg (and that made me think afresh of the man with the iron on *his* leg), and found the tendency of exercise to bring the bread and butter out at my ankle, quite unmanageable and unconquerable. Happily I slipped away, and deposited that part of my conscience in my garret bedroom.

"Hark!" said I, when I had done my stirring, and was taking a final warm in the chimney corner before being sent up to bed, "was that guns, Jo?"

"Ah!" said Jo. "There's another convict off."

"What does that mean, Jo?" said I.

Mrs. Jo, who always took explanations upon herself, said, snappishly, "Escaped. Escaped."

While Mrs. Jo sat with her head bending over her needlework, I put my mouth into the forms of saying to Jo, "What's a convict?" Jo put *his* mouth into the forms of returning such a highly elaborate answer, that I could make out nothing of it but the single word "Pip."

"There was one off last night," said Jo, aloud, "after sunset gun. And they fired warning of him. And now, it appears, they're firing warning of another."

"*Who's* firing?" said I.

"Drat that child," interposed my sister, frowning at me over her work, "what a questioner he is. Ask no questions, and you'll be told no lies."

It was not very polite to herself, I thought, to imply that I should be told lies by her, even if I did ask questions. But she never was polite, unless there was company.

At this point Jo greatly augmented my curiosity by taking the utmost pains to open his mouth very wide, and put it into the form of a word that looked to me like "sulks." Therefore I naturally pointed to Mrs. Jo, and put my mouth into the form of saying "her?" But Jo wouldn't hear of that at all and again opened his mouth very wide, and shook the

form of a most emphatic word out of it. But I could make nothing of the word.

"Mrs. Jo," said I, as a last resource, "I should like to know, if you wouldn't much mind, where the firing comes from?"

"Lord bless the boy!" exclaimed my sister, as if she didn't quite mean that, but rather the contrary. "From the Hulks."

"Oh-ho!" said I, looking at Jo. "Hulks!"

Jo gave a reproachful cough, as much as to say, "Well, I told you so."

"And please, what's Hulks?" said I.

"That's the way with this boy!" exclaimed my sister, pointing me out with her needle and thread, and shaking her head. "Answer him one question, and he'll ask you a dozen directly. Hulks are prison ships, right 'cross th' meshes." We always used that name for marshes, in our country.

"I wonder who's put into prison ships, and why they're put there?" said I, in a general way, and with desperation.

It was too much for Mrs. Jo, who immediately rose. "I tell you what, young man," said she, "I didn't bring you up by hand to badger people's lives out. It would be blame to me, and not praise, if I had. People are put in the Hulks because they murder, and because they rob, and do all sorts of bad; and they almost always begin by asking questions. Now you get along to bed!"

If I slept at all that night, it was only to imagine myself drifting down the river on a strong spring tide to the Hulks. I was afraid to sleep, even if I had been inclined, for I knew that at the first faint dawn of morning I must rob the pantry. There was no getting a light by easy friction then; to have got one I must have struck it out of flint and steel, and have made a great noise.

As soon as the great black velvet pall outside my little window was shot with gray, I got up and went down stairs: every board upon the way, and every crack in every board, calling after me "Stop thief!" and "Get up, Mrs. Jo!"

In the pantry, which was far more abundantly supplied than usual, owing to the season, I was very much alarmed by a hare hanging up by the heels, whom I rather thought I caught, when my back was half turned, waking. I had no time for verification, no time for selection, no time for anything, for I had no time to spare.

I stole some bread, some rind of cheese, about half a jar of mincemeat (which I tied up in my pocket handkerchief with my last night's slice), some brandy from a stone bottle (which I decanted into a glass bottle I had secretly used for making that intoxicating fluid, Spanish licorice water, up in my room: diluting the stone bottle from a jug in the kitchen cupboard), a meat bone with very little on it, and a beautiful round, compact pork pie. I was nearly

going away without the pie, but I was tempted to mount upon a shelf to look what it was that was put away so carefully in a covered earthenware dish in a corner, and I found it was the pie, and I took it in the hope that it was not intended for early use, and would not be missed for some time.

There was a door in the kitchen communicating with the forge; I unlocked and unbolted that door and got a file from among Jo's tools. Then I put the fastenings as I had found them, opened the door at which I had entered when I ran home last night, shut it, and ran for the misty marshes.

CHAPTER III

It was a rimy morning, and very damp. I had seen the damp lying on the outside of my little window, as if some goblin had been crying there all night, and using the window for a pocket handkerchief. Now I saw the damp lying on the bare hedges and spare grass, like a coarser sort of spiders' webs; hanging itself from twig to twig and blade to blade. On every rail and gate wet lay clammy; and the marsh mist was so thick that the wooden finger on the post, directing people to our village, a direction which they never accepted, for they never came there, was invisible to me until I was quite close under it. Then, as I looked up at it, while it dripped, it seemed,

to my oppressed conscience, like a phantom devoting me to the Hulks.

The mist was heavier yet when I got out upon the marshes, so that, instead of my running at everything, everything seemed to run at me. This was very disagreeable to a quiet mind. The gates and dikes and banks came bursting at me through the mist, as if they cried as plainly as could be, "A boy with a pork pie! Stop him!" The black cattle came upon me with like suddenness, staring out of their eyes, and smoking out of their nostrils, "Halloa, young thief!" One black ox, with a white cravat on, who had to my awakened conscience something of a clerical air, fixed me so steadily with his eyes, and moved his blunt head round in such an accusatory manner as I moved round, that I called out to him, "I couldn't help it! It wasn't for myself I took it!" Upon which he put down his head, blew a cloud of smoke out of his nose, and vanished with a kick-up of his hind leg and flourish of his tail.

All this time I was getting on toward the river; but however fast I went, I couldn't warm my feet, to which the damp cold seemed riveted, as the iron was riveted to the leg of the man I was running to meet. But I was soon at the Battery, and there was the man, hugging himself and limping to and fro, as if he had never all night left off hugging and limping, waiting for me. He was awfully cold, to be sure. I half expected to see him drop down before my face

and die of cold. His eyes looked so awfully hungry, too, that when I handed him the file it occured to me he would have tried to eat it, if he had not seen my bundle. He did not turn me upside down, this time, to get at what I had, but left me right side upward while I opened the bundle and emptied my pockets.

"What's in the bottle, boy?" said he.

"Brandy," said I.

He was already handing mincemeat down his throat in the most curious manner, more like a man who was putting it away somewhere in a violent hurry than a man who was eating it, but he left off to take some of the liquor, shivering all the while so violently that it was quite as much as he could do to keep the neck of the bottle between his teeth.

"I think you have got the ague," said I.

"I'm much of your opinion, boy," said he.

"It's bad about here. You've been lying out on the meshes, and they're dreadful aguish. Rheumatic, too."

"I'll eat my breakfast afore they're the death of me," said he. "I'd do that, if I was going to be strung up to that there gallows as there is over there directly arterward. I'll beat the shivers so far, *I'll* bet you a guinea."

He was gobbling mincemeat, meat, bone, bread, cheese, and pork pie all at once: staring distrustfully while he did so at the mist all round us, and often

stopping, even stopping his jaws, to listen. Some real or fancied sound, some clink upon the river, or breathing of beasts upon the marsh, now gave him a start, and he said, suddenly:

"You're not a false imp? You brought no one with you?"

"No, sir! No!"

"Nor give no one the office to follow you?"

"No!"

"Well," said he, "I believe you. You'd be but a fierce young hound indeed, if at your time of life you could help to hunt a wretched warmint, hunted as near death and dunghill as this poor wretched warmint is!"

Something clicked in his throat, as if he had works in him like a clock, and was going to strike. And he smeared his ragged, rough sleeve over his eyes.

Pitying his desolation, and watching him as he gradually settled down upon the pie, I made bold to say, "I am glad you enjoy it."

"Did you speak?"

"I said I was glad you enjoyed it."

"Thankee, my boy. I do."

I had often watched a large dog of ours eating his food; and I now noticed a decided similarity between the dog's way of eating and the man's. The man took strong, sharp, sudden bites, just like the dog. He swallowed, or rather snapped up, every mouthful too soon and too fast; and he looked sideways here and there while he ate, as if he thought there

was danger of somebody's coming to take the pie away. He was altogether too unsettled in his mind over it to appreciate it comfortably, I thought, or to have anybody to dine with him, without making a chop with his jaws at the visitor. In all of these particulars he was very like the dog.

As soon as he had eaten, he was down on the rank wet grass, filing at his iron like a madman, and not minding me or minding his own leg, which had an old chafe upon it and was bloody, but which he handled as roughly as if it had no more feeling in it than the file. I was very much afraid of him again, now that he had worked himself into this fierce hurry, and I was likewise very much afraid of keeping away from home any longer. I told him I must go, but he took no notice, so I thought the best thing I could do was to slip off. The last I saw of him, his head was bent over his knee, and he was working hard at his fetter, muttering impatient imprecations at it and at his leg. The last I heard of him, I stopped in the mist to listen, and the file was still going.

Pip reached home safely and in time forgot his terrifying adventure. The convict was recaptured, but later escaped and made his way to Australia. In his gratitude to Pip, he sent back to England much of the fortune he had made, and by that means Pip had the advantage of a fine education.

—*Great Expectations*

PAUL AND FLORENCE DOMBEY

LITTLE DOMBEY was the son of a rich city merchant. Ever since his marriage, ten years before our story commences, Mr. Dombey had ardently desired to have a son. He was a cold, stern, and pompous man, whose life and interests were entirely absorbed in his business, which appeared to him to be the most important thing in the whole world.

It was not so much that he wanted a son to love, and to love him, but because he was so desirous of having one to associate with himself in the business, and make the house once more Dombey and Son in fact, as it was in name, that the little boy who was at last born to him was so precious, and so eagerly welcomed.

There was a pretty little daughter six years old, but her father had taken so little notice of her that it was doubtful if he would have known her had he met her in the street. Of what use was a girl to Dombey and Son? She could not go into the business.

Little Dombey's mother died when he was born, but the event did not greatly disturb Mr. Dombey. Since his son lived, what did it matter to him

that his little daughter Florence was breaking her heart in loneliness for the mother who had loved and cherished her!

During the first few months of his life, little Dombey grew and flourished; and as soon as he was old enough to take notice, there was no one he loved so well as his sister Florence. He would laugh and hold out his arms as soon as she came in sight, and the affection of her baby brother comforted the lonely little girl.

In due time the baby was taken to church, and baptized by his father's name of Paul. A grand and stately christening it was, followed by a grand and stately feast; and little Paul, when he was brought in to be admired by the company, was declared by his godmother to be "an angel, and the perfect picture of his own papa."

Whether baby Paul caught cold on his christening day or not, no one could tell, but from that time he seemed to waste and pine; his healthy and thriving babyhood had received a check, and as for illnesses, "there never was a blessed dear so put upon," his nurse said. Every tooth cost him a fit, and as for chicken pox, whooping cough, and measles, they followed one upon the other, and, to quote Nurse Richards again, "seized and worried him like tiger cats," so that by the time he was five years old, though he had the prettiest, sweetest little face in the world. there was always a patient, wistful look

upon it, and he was thin and tiny and delicate. He would be as merry and full of spirits as other children when playing with Florence in their nursery, but he soon got tired, and had such old-fashioned ways of speaking and doing things, that Richards often shook her head sadly over him.

When he sat in his little armchair with his father, after dinner, as Mr. Dombey would have him do every day, they were a strange pair—so like, and so unlike each other.

"What is money, papa?" asked Paul on one of these occasions, crossing his tiny arms as well as he could—just as his father's were crossed.

"Why, gold, silver, and copper; you know what it is well enough, Paul," answered his father.

"Oh, yes; I mean, what can money do?"

"Anything, everything—almost," replied Mr. Dombey, taking one of his son's wee hands, and beating it softly against his own.

Paul drew his hand gently away. "It didn't save me my mamma, and it can't make me strong and big," said he.

"Why, you *are* strong and you *are* big, as big as such little people usually are," returned Mr. Dombey.

"No," replied Paul, sighing, "when Florence was as little as me, she was strong and tall, and did not get tired of playing as I do. I am terribly tired sometimes, papa."

Mr. Dombey's anxiety was aroused, and he summoned his sister, Mrs. Chick, to consult with him, and the doctor was sent for to examine Paul.

"The child is hardly so stout as we could wish," said the doctor, "his mind is too big for his body; he thinks too much—let him try sea air—sea air does wonders for children."

So it was arranged that Florence, Paul, and Nurse Wickam should go to Brighton, and stay in the house of a lady named Mrs. Pipchin, who kept a very select boarding house for children, and whose management of them was said, in the best circles, to be truly marvelous. Mr. Dombey himself went down to Brighton every week, and had the children stay with him at his hotel from Saturday to Monday, that he might judge of his son's progress toward health.

There is no doubt that, apart from his importance to the house of Dombey and Son, little Paul had crept into his father's heart, cold though it still was toward his daughter, colder than ever now; for there was in it a sort of unacknowledged jealousy of the warm love lavished on her by Paul, which he himself was unable to win.

Mrs. Pipchin was a marvelously ugly old lady, with a hook nose and stern, cold eyes. Two other children lived at present under her charge, a mild, blue-eyed little girl who was known as Miss Pankey, and a Master Bitherstone, a solemn and sad-looking

little boy whose parents were in India, and who asked Florence in a depressed voice whether she could give him any idea of the way back to Bengal.

"Well, Master Paul, how do you think you will like me?" said Mrs. Pipchin, seeing the child intently regarding her.

"I don't think I shall like you at all," replied Paul, shaking his head. "I want to go away. I do not like your house."

Paul did not like Mrs. Pipchin, but he would sit in his armchair and look at her, just as he had looked at his father at home. Her ugliness seemed to fascinate him.

As the weeks went by little Paul grew more healthy-looking, but he did not seem to grow any stronger, and could not run about out of doors. A little carriage was therefore got for him, in which he could be wheeled down to the beach, where he would pass the greater part of the day.

Consistent in his odd tastes, the child set aside a ruddy-faced lad who was proposed as the drawer of his carriage, and selected, instead, his grandfather—a weazened, cold, crab-faced man, in a suit of battered oilskin, who had got tough and stringy from long pickling in salt water, and who smelled like a weedy sea beach when the tide is out.

With this notable attendant to pull him along, and Florence always walking by his side, and the despondent Wickam bringing up the rear, he went

down to the margin of the ocean every day. There he would sit or lie in his carriage for hours together; never so distressed as by the company of children—Florence alone excepted, always.

"Go away, if you please," he would say to any child who came to bear him company. "Thank you, but I don't want you."

Some small voice, near his ear, would ask him how he was, perhaps.

"I am very well, I thank you," he would answer. "But you had better go and play, if you please."

Then he would turn his head and watch the child go away, and say to Florence, "We don't want any others, do we? Kiss me, Floy."

"I love you, Floy," he said one day to her, "if you went to India as that boy's sister did, I should die."

Florence laid her head against his pillow, and whispered how much stronger he was growing.

"Oh, yes, I know, I am a great deal better," said Paul, "a very great deal better. Listen, Floy; what is it the sea keeps saying?"

"Nothing, dear; it is only the rolling of the waves that you hear."

"Yes, but they are always saying something, and always the same thing. What place is over there, Floy?"

She told him there was another country opposite, but Paul said he did not mean that, he meant

somewhere much farther away, oh, much farther away—and often he would break off in the midst of their talk to listen to the sea and gaze out toward that country "farther away."

After having lived at Brighton for a year, Paul was certainly much stronger, though still thin and delicate. And on one of his weekly visits, Mr. Dombey observed to Mrs. Pipchin, with pompous condescension, "My son is getting on, Madam, he is really getting on. He is six years of age, and six will be sixteen before we have time to look about us." And then he went on to explain that Paul's weak health having kept him back in his studies, which, considering the great destiny before the heir of Dombey and Son, was much to be regretted, he had made arrangements to place him at the educational establishment of Dr. Blimber, which was close by. Florence was, for the present, to remain under Mrs. Pipchin's care, and see her brother every week.

Dr. Blimber's school was a great hothouse for the forcing of boys' brains; no matter how backward a boy was, Dr. Blimber could always bring him on, and make a man of him in no time; and Dr. Blimber promised speedily to make a man of Paul.

"Shall you like to be made a man of, my son?" asked Mr. Dombey.

"I'd rather be a child and stay with Floy," answered Paul.

Then a different life began for little Dombey.

Miss Blimber, the doctor's daughter, a learned lady in spectacles, was his special tutor, and from morning till night his poor little brains were forced and crammed, till his head was heavy and always had a dull ache in it, and his small legs grew weak again. Every day he looked a little thinner and a little paler, and became more old-fashioned than ever in his looks and ways—"old-fashioned" was a distinguishing title which clung to him. He was gentle and polite to everyone, always looking out for small kindnesses which he might do to any inmate of the house. Everyone liked "little Dombey," but everyone down to the footman said with the same kind of tender smile—he was such an old-fashioned boy. "The oddest and most old-fashioned child in the world," Dr. Blimber would say to his daughter; "but bring him on, Cornelia—bring him on."

And Cornelia did bring him on; and Florence, seeing how pale and weary the little fellow looked when he came to her on Saturdays, and how he could not rest for anxiety about his lessons, would lighten his labors a little, and ease his mind by helping him to prepare his week's work.

One of Paul's friends at Dr. Blimber's school was a Mr. Toots, a young gentleman with a swollen nose and an excessively large head. The people said that the doctor overdid it with young Toots, and that when he began to have whiskers he left off having brains.

One day, when his lessons were over, about a fortnight before the commencement of holidays, little Paul's head, which had long been ailing more or less, and was sometimes very heavy and painful, felt so uneasy that night that he was obliged to support it on his hand. And yet it drooped so, that by little and little it sank on Mr. Toots' knee, and rested there, as if it had no care ever to be lifted up again.

That was no reason why he should be deaf; but he must have been, he thought, for, by and by, he heard Mr. Feeder calling in his ear, and gently shaking him to rouse his attention. And when he raised his head, quite scared, and looked about him, he found that Dr. Blimber had come into the room, and that the window was open, and that his forehead was wet with sprinkled water; though how all this had been done without his knowledge was very curious indeed.

"Ah! Come, come! That's well! How is my little friend now?" said Dr. Blimber, encouragingly.

"Oh, quite well, thank you, sir," said Paul.

But there seemed to be something the matter with the floor, for he couldn't stand upon it steadily; and with the walls too, for they were inclined to turn round and round, and could only be stopped by being looked at very hard indeed. Mr. Toots' head had the appearance of being at once bigger and farther off than was quite natural. When he took Paul in his arms, to carry him upstairs, Paul ob-

served with astonishment that the door was in quite a different place from that in which he had expected to find it, and almost thought, at first, that Mr. Toots was going to walk straight up the chimney.

It was very kind of Mr. Toots, Paul's chief patron, to carry him to the top of the house so tenderly; and Paul told him that it was. But Mr. Toots said he would do a great deal more than that, if he could; and indeed he did more as it was, for he helped Paul to undress, and helped him to bed, in the kindest manner possible.

In a few days Paul was able to get up and creep about the house. He wondered sometimes why everyone spoke so very kindly to him, and was more than ever careful to do any little kindnesses he could think of for them. Even the rough, ugly dog Diogenes, who lived in the yard, came in for a share of his attentions.

There was to be a party at Dr. Blimber's on the evening before the boys went home, and Paul wished to remain for this, because Florence was coming, and he wanted her to see how everyone was fond of him. He was to go away with her after the party. Paul sat in a corner of the sofa all the evening, and everyone was very kind to him; indeed, it was quite extraordinary, Paul thought, and he was very happy. He liked to see how pretty Florence was, and how everyone admired and wished to dance with her. When the time came for them to take leave, the

whole houseful gathered on the steps to say good-by to little Dombey and his sister, Toots even opening the carriage door to say it over again.

"Good-by, Dr. Blimber," said Paul, stretching out his hand.

"Good-by, my little friend," returned the doctor.

"I'm very much obliged to you, sir," said Paul, looking innocently up into his awful face. "Ask them to take care of Diogenes, if you please."

Diogenes was the dog, who had never in his life received a friend into his confidence before Paul. So the doctor promised that every attention should be paid to Diogenes in Paul's absence.

After resting for a night at Mrs. Pipchin's house, little Paul went home, and was carried straight upstairs to his bed.

"Floy, dear," said he to his sister, when he was comfortably settled, "was that papa in the hall when I was carried in?"

"Yes, dear," answered Florence.

"He didn't cry, did he, Floy, and go into his own room when he saw me?"

Florence could only shake her head and hide her face against his, as she kissed him.

"I should not like to think papa cried," murmured little Paul, as he went to sleep.

He lay in his bed day after day quite happily and patiently, content to watch and talk to Florence. He would tell her his dreams, and how he always

saw the sunlit ripples of a river rolling, rolling fast in front of him. Sometimes he seemed to be rocking in a little boat on the water and its motion lulled him to rest, and then he would be floating away, away to that shore farther off, which he could not see. One day he told Florence that the water was rippling brighter and faster than ever, and that he could not see anything else.

"My own boy, cannot you see your poor father?" said Mr. Dombey, bending over him.

"Oh, yes; but don't be so sorry, dear papa, I am so happy—good-by, dear papa." Presently he opened his eyes again, and said, "Floy, mamma is like you. I can see her. Come close to me, Floy, and tell them," whispered the dying boy, "that the face of the picture of Christ on the staircase at school is not divine enough. The light from it is shining on me now, and the water is shining, too, and rippling so fast, so fast."

The evening light shone into the room, but little Paul's spirit had gone out on the rippling water, and the divine Face was shining on him from the farther shore.

One day, about a week after the funeral, Florence was sitting at her work when Susan appeared, with a face half laughing and half crying, to announce a visitor.

"A visitor! To see me, Susan?" said Florence, looking up in astonishment.

"Well, it *is* a wonder, ain't it now, Miss Floy," said Susan, "but I wish you had a many visitors, I do, indeed, for you'd be all the better for it."

"But the visitor, Susan!" said Florence.

Susan, with a hysterical explosion that was as much a laugh as a sob, and as much a sob as a laugh, answered:

"Mr. Toots!"

The smile that appeared on Florence's face passed from it in a moment, and her eyes filled with tears. But at any rate it was a smile, and that gave great satisfaction to Miss Nipper.

"My own feelings exactly, Miss Floy," said Susan, putting her apron to her eyes, and shaking her head. "Immediately I see that innocent in the hall, Miss Floy, I burst out laughing first, and then I choked."

Susan Nipper involuntarily proceeded to do the like again on the spot. In the meantime Mr. Toots, who had come upstairs after her, all unconscious of the effect he produced, announced himself with his knuckles on the door, and walked in very briskly.

"How d'ye do, Miss Dombey?" said Mr. Toots. "I am very well, I thank you; how are you?"

Mr. Toots—than whom there were few better fellows in the world, though there may have been one or two brighter spirits—had laboriously invented this long burst of discourse with the view of relieving the feelings of both Florence and himself.

But finding that he had run through his property, as it were, in an injudicious manner, by squandering the whole before taking a chair, or before Florence had uttered a word, or before he had well got in at the door, he deemed it advisable to begin again.

"How d'ye do, Miss Dombey?" said Mr. Toots. "I'm very well, I thank you; how are you?"

Florence gave him her hand, and said she was very well.

"I'm very well, indeed," said Mr. Toots, taking a chair. "Very well, indeed, I am. I don't remember," said Mr. Toots, after reflecting a little, "that I was ever better, thank you."

"It's very kind of you to come," said Florence, taking up her work. "I am very glad to see you."

Mr. Toots replied with a chuckle. Thinking that might be too lively, he corrected it with a sigh. Thinking that might be too melancholy, he corrected it with a chuckle. Not thoroughly pleasing himself with either mode of reply, he breathed hard.

"You were very kind to my dear brother," said Florence, obeying her own natural impulse to relieve him by saying so. "He often talked to me about you."

"Oh, it's of no consequence," said Mr. Toots, hastily. "Warm, ain't it?"

"It's beautiful weather," replied Florence.

"It agrees with *me!*" said Mr. Toots. "I don't think I ever was so well as I find myself at present, I'm obliged to you."

After stating this curious and unexpected fact, Mr. Toots fell into a deep well of silence.

"You have left Dr. Blimber's, I think?" said Florence, trying to help him out.

"I should hope so," returned Mr. Toots. And he tumbled in again.

He remained at the bottom, apparently drowned, for at least ten minutes. At the expiration of that period he suddenly floated, and said:

"Well! Good morning, Miss Dombey."

"Are you going?" asked Florence, rising.

"I don't know, though. No, not just at present," said Mr. Toots, sitting down again, most unexpectedly. "The fact is—I say, Miss Dombey!"

"Don't be afraid to speak to me," said Florence, with a quiet smile. "I should be very glad if you would talk about my brother."

"Would you, though," retorted Mr. Toots, with sympathy in every fiber of his otherwise expressionless face. "Poor Dombey! Poor Dombey! I say, Miss Dombey!" blubbered Toots.

"Yes," said Florence.

"There's a friend he took to very much at last. I thought you'd like to have him, perhaps, as a sort of keepsake. You remember his remembering Diogenes?"

"Oh, yes! oh, yes!" cried Florence.

"Poor Dombey! So do I," said Mr. Toots.

Mr. Toots, seeing Florence in tears, had great difficulty in getting beyond this point, and had nearly tumbled into the well again. But a chuckle saved him on the brink.

"I say," he proceeded, "Miss Dombey! I could have had him stolen for ten shillings, if they hadn't given him up, and I would, but they were glad to get rid of him, I think. If you'd like to have him, he's at the door. I brought him on purpose for you. He ain't a lady's dog, you know," said Mr. Toots, "but you won't mind that, will you?"

In fact, Diogenes was at that moment, as they presently ascertained from looking down into the street, staring through the window of a hackney cabriolet, into which, for conveyance to that spot, he had been ensnared on a false pretense of rats among the straw. Sooth to say, he was as unlike a lady's dog as dog might be; and in his gruff anxiety to get out presented an appearance sufficiently unpromising as he gave short yelps out of one side of his mouth. Overbalancing himself by the intensity of every one of those efforts, he tumbled down into the straw, and then sprang, panting, up again, putting out his tongue, as if he had come express to a dispensary to be examined for his health.

But though Diogenes was as ridiculous a dog as one would meet with on a summer's day, a blundering, ill-favored, clumsy, bullet-headed dog, continually acting on a wrong idea that there was an enemy

in the neighborhood, whom it was meritorious to bark at. Although he was far from good-tempered, and certainly was not clever, and had hair all over his eyes, and a comic nose, and an inconsistent tail and a gruff voice, he was dearer to Florence, in virtue of that parting remembrance of him and that request that he might be taken care of, than the most valuable and beautiful of his kind. So dear, indeed, was this same ugly Diogenes, and so welcome to her, that she took the jeweled hand of Mr. Toots and kissed it in her gratitude. And when Diogenes, released, came tearing up the stairs and, bouncing into the room, dived under all the furniture, and wound a long iron chain that dangled from his neck round legs of chairs and tables, and then tugged at it until his eyes became unnaturally visible, in consequence of their nearly starting out of his head, and when he growled at Mr. Toots, who affected familiarity, Florence was as pleased with him as if he had been a miracle of discretion.

Mr. Toots was so overjoyed by the success of his present, and was so delighted to see Florence bending down over Diogenes, smoothing his coarse back with her delicate little hand—Diogenes graciously allowing it from the first moment of their acquaintance—that he felt it difficult to take leave. He would, no doubt, have been a much longer time in making up his mind to do so if he had not been assisted by

Diogenes himself, who suddenly took it into his head to bay Mr. Toots, and to make short runs at him with his mouth open. Not exactly seeing his way to the end of these demonstrations, Mr. Toots, with chuckles, finally took himself off and got away.

"Come, then, Di! Dear Di! Make friends with your new mistress. Let us love each other, Di!" said Florence, fondling his shaggy head. And Di, the rough and gruff, as if his hairy hide were pervious to the tear that dropped upon it, and his dog's heart melted as it fell, put his nose up to her face, and swore fidelity.

Diogenes the man did not speak plainer to Alexander the Great than Diogenes the dog spoke to Florence. He subscribed to the offer of his little mistress cheerfully, and devoted himself to her service. A banquet was immediately provided for him in a corner. When he had eaten and drunk his fill, he went to the window, where Florence was sitting, looking on, rose up on his hind legs, with his awkward forepaws on her shoulders, licked her face and hands, nestled his great head against her heart, and wagged his tail till he was tired. Finally, Diogenes coiled himself up at her feet and went to sleep.

—*Dombey and Son*

DICK SWIVELLER and the MARCHIONESS

RICHARD SWIVELLER, a good-hearted, though somewhat erratic young man, the clerk of Sampson Brass, a scheming lawyer, often found time hanging heavily on his hands, and for the better preservation of his cheerfulness therefore, and to prevent his faculties from rusting, provided himself with a cribbage board and pack of cards, and accustomed himself to play at cribbage with a dummy, for twenty, thirty, or sometimes even fifty thousand pounds a side, besides many hazardous bets to a considerable amount.

As these games were very silently conducted, notwithstanding the magnitude of the interests involved, Mr. Swiveller began to think that on those evenings when Mr. and Miss Brass were out, he heard a kind of snorting or hard-breathing sound in the direction of the door, which it occurred to him, after some reflection, must proceed from the small servant, who always had a cold from damp living. Looking intently that way one night, he plainly distinguished an eye gleaming and glistening at the keyhole; and having now no doubt that his suspicions were cor-

The Marchioness peeps through the Keyhole

rect, he stole softly to the door and pounced upon her before she was aware of his approach.

"Oh! I didn't mean any harm indeed. Upon my word I didn't," cried the small servant, struggling like a much larger one. "It's so very dull downstairs. Please don't you tell upon me; please don't."

"Tell upon you!" said Dick. "Do you mean to say you were looking through the keyhole for company?"

"Yes, upon my word I was," replied the small servant.

"How long have you been cooling your eye there?" said Dick.

"Oh, ever since you first began to play them cards, and long before."

"Well, come in," he said, after a little consideration. "Here, sit down, and I'll teach you how to play."

"Oh! I dursn't do it," rejoined the small servant. "Miss Sally 'ud kill me if she know'd I came up here."

"Have you got a fire downstairs?" said Dick.

"A very little one," replied the small servant.

"Miss Sally couldn't kill me if she know'd I went down there, so I'll come," said Richard, putting the cards into his pocket. "Why, how thin you are! What do you mean by it?"

"It ain't my fault."

"Could you eat any bread and meat?" said Dick, taking down his hat. "Yes? Ah! I thought so. Did you ever taste beer?"

"I had a sip of it once," said the small servant.

"Here's a state of things!" cried Mr. Swiveller, raising his eyes to the ceiling. "She *never* tasted it. It can't be tasted in a sip! Why, how old are you?"

"I don't know."

Mr. Swiveller opened his eyes very wide and appeared thoughtful for a moment; then, bidding the child mind the door until he came back, vanished straightway.

Presently he returned, followed by the boy from the public house, who bore in one hand a plate of bread and beef, and in the other a great pot, filled with some very fragrant compound, which sent forth a grateful steam, and was indeed choice purl, made after a particular recipe which Mr. Swiveller had imparted to the landlord at a period when he was deep in his books and desirous to conciliate his friendship. Relieving the boy of his burden at the door, and charging his little companion to fasten it to prevent surprise, Mr. Swiveller followed her into the kitchen. "There!" said Richard, putting the plate before her. "First of all, clear that off, and then you'll see what's next."

The small servant needed no second bidding, and the plate was soon empty.

"Next," said Dick, handing the purl, "take a pull at that; but moderate your transports, you know, for you're not used to it. Well, is it good?"

"Oh! isn't it?" said the small servant.

Mr. Swiveller appeared gratified beyond all expression by this reply, and took a long draught himself, steadfastly regarding his companion while he did so. These preliminaries disposed of, he applied himself to teaching her the game, which she soon learned tolerably well, being both sharp-witted and cunning.

"Now," said Mr. Swiveller, putting two sixpences into a saucer, and trimming the wretched candle, when the cards had been cut and dealt, "those are the stakes. If you win, you get 'em all. If I win, I get 'em. To make it seem more real and pleasant I shall call you the Marchioness, do you hear?"

The small servant nodded.

"Then, Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, "fire away!"

The Marchioness, holding her cards very tightly in both hands, considered which to play, and Mr. Swiveller, assuming the gay and fashionable air which such society required, took another pull at the tankard, and waited for her to lead.

Mr. Swiveller and his partner played several rubbers with varying success, until the loss of three sixpences, the gradual sinking of the purl and the

striking of ten o'clock combined to render that gentleman mindful of the flight of time, and the expediency of withdrawing before Mr. Sampson and Miss Sally Brass returned.

"With which object in view, Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller gravely, "I shall ask your ladyship's permission to put the board in my pocket, and to retire from the presence when I have finished this tankard; merely observing, Marchioness, that since life like a river is flowing, I care not how fast it rolls on, ma'am, on, while such purl on the bank still is growing, and such eyes light the waves as they run. Marchioness, your health! You will excuse my wearing my hat, but the palace is damp, and the marble floor is, if I may be allowed the expression, sloppy."

As a precaution against this latter inconvenience, Mr. Swiveller had been sitting for some time with his feet on the hob, in which attitude he now gave utterance to these apologetic observations, and slowly sipped the last choice drops of nectar.

"The Baron Sampsono Brasso and his fair sister are (you tell me) at the Play?" said Mr. Swiveller, leaning his left arm heavily upon the table, and raising his voice and his right leg after the manner of a theatrical bandit.

The Marchioness nodded.

"Ha!" said Mr. Swiveller with a portentous frown. "'Tis well, Marchioness!—but no matter. Some wine there. Ho!" He illustrated these melo-

dramatic morsels by handing the tankard to himself with great humility, receiving it haughtily, drinking from it thirstily, and smacking his lips fiercely.

The small servant, who was not so well acquainted with theatrical conventionalities as Mr. Swiveller (having indeed never seen a play or heard one spoken of, except by some chance through chinks of doors and in other forbidden places), was rather alarmed by demonstrations so novel in their nature, and showed her concern so plainly in her looks that Mr. Swiveller felt it necessary to discharge his brigand manner for one more suitable to private life, as he asked:

"Do they often go where glory waits 'em, and leave you here?"

"Oh, yes; I believe they do," returned the small servant. "Miss Sallie's such a one'er for that, she is."

"Such a what?" said Dick.

"Such a one-er," returned the Marchioness.

After a moment's reflection, Mr. Swiveller determined to forego his responsible duty of setting her right and to suffer her to talk on, as it was evident that her tongue was loosened by the purl and her opportunities for conversation were not so frequent as to render a momentary check of little consequence.

"They sometimes go to see Mr. Quilp," said the small servant with a shrewd look, "they go to many places, bless you."

"Is Mr. Brass a wunner?" said Dick.

"Not half what Miss Sally is, he isn't," replied the small servant, shaking her head. "Bless you, he'd never do anything without her."

"Oh! He wouldn't, wouldn't he?" said Dick.

"Miss Sally keeps him in such order," said the small servant, "he always asks her advice, he does; and he catches it sometimes. Bless you, you wouldn't believe how much he catches it."

"I suppose," said Dick, "that they consult together a good deal, and talk about a great many people—about me, for instance, sometimes, eh, Marchioness?"

The Marchioness nodded amazingly.

"Complimentary?" said Mr. Swiveller.

The Marchioness changed the motion of her head, which had not yet left off nodding, and suddenly began to shake it from side to side with a vehemence which threatened to dislocate her neck.

"Humph!" Dick muttered. "Would it be any breach of confidence, Marchioness, to relate what they say of the humble individual who has now the honor to——?"

"Miss Sallie says you're a funny chap," replied his friend.

"Well, Marchioness," said Swiveller, "that's not uncomplimentary. Merriment, Marchioness, is not a bad or degrading quality. Old King Cole was himself a merry old soul, if we may put any faith in the pages of history."

"But she says," pursued his companion, "that you ain't to be trusted."

"Why, really, Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller thoughtfully, "several ladies and gentlemen—not exactly professional persons, but tradespeople, ma'am, tradespeople—have made the same remark. The obscure citizen who keeps the hotel over the way inclined strongly to that opinion tonight when I ordered him to prepare the banquet. It's a popular prejudice, Marchioness, and yet I am sure I don't know why, for I have been trusted in my time to a considerable amount, and I can safely say that I never forsook my trust until it deserted me, never. Mr. Brass is of the same opinion, I suppose?"

His friend nodded again, with a cunning look which seemed to hint that Mr. Brass held stronger opinions on the subject than his sister; and seeming to recollect herself, added imploringly, "But don't you ever tell upon me, or I shall be beat to death."

"Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, rising, "the word of a gentleman is as good as his bond—sometimes better; as in the present case, where his bond might prove but a doubtful sort of security. I am your friend, and I hope we shall play many more rubbers together in the same saloon. But, Marchioness," added Richard, stopping on his way to the door, and wheeling slowly around upon the small servant, who was following with the candle, "it oc-

curs to me that you must be in the constant habit of airing your eye at keyholes, to know all this."

"I only wanted," replied the trembling Marchioness, "to know where the key of the safe was hid; that was all; and I wouldn't have taken much, if I had found it—only enough to squench my hunger."

"You didn't find it, then?" said Dick. "But of course you didn't, or you'd be plumper. Good night, Marchioness. Fare thee well, and if forever, then forever fare thee well—and put up the chain, Marchioness, in case of accidents."

With this parting injunction, Mr. Swiveller emerged from the house, and feeling that he had by this time taken quite as much to drink as promised to be good for his constitution (purl being a rather strong and heady compound), wisely resolved to betake himself to his lodgings, and to bed at once. Homeward he went therefore; and his apartments (for he still retained the plural fiction) being at no great distance from the office, he was soon seated in his own bedchamber, where, having pulled off one boot and forgotten the other, he fell into deep cogitation.

"This Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, folding his arms, "is a very extraordinary person—surrounded by mysteries, ignorant of the taste of beer, unacquainted with her own name (which is less remarkable), and taking a limited view of society

through the keyholes of doors—can these things be her destiny, or has some unknown person started an opposition to the decrees of fate? It is a most inscrutable and unmitigated staggerer!"

When his meditations had attained this satisfactory point, he became aware of his remaining boot, of which, with unimpaired solemnity, he proceeded to divest himself; shaking his head with exceeding gravity all the time, and sighing deeply.

"These rubbers," said Mr. Swiveller, putting on his nightcap in exactly the same style as he wore his hat, "remind me of the matrimonial fireside. My old girl, Chegg's wife, plays cribbage; all-fours alike. She rings the changes on 'em now. From sport to sport they hurry her, to banish her regrets, and when they win a smile from her they think that she forgets, but she don't. By this time, I should say," added Richard, getting his left cheek into profile, and looking complacently at the reflection of a very little scrap of whisker in the looking-glass; "by this time, I should say, the iron has entered into her soul. It serves her right."

Melting from this stern and obdurate into the tender and pathetic mood, Mr. Swiveller groaned a little, walked wildly up and down, and even made a show of tearing his hair, which, however, he thought better of, and wrenched the tassel from his nightcap instead. At last, undressing himself with a gloomy resolution, he got into bed.

Some men, in his blighted position, would have taken to drinking; but as Mr. Swiveller had taken to that before, he only took, on receiving the news that his girl was lost to him forever, to playing the flute; thinking, after mature consideration, that it was a good, sound, dismal occupation, not only in unison with his own sad thoughts, but calculated to awaken a fellow feeling in the bosom of his neighbors. In pursuance of this resolution, he now drew a little table to his bedside, and, arranging the light and a small oblong music book to the best advantage, took his flute from its box and began to play most mournfully.

The air was "Away with melancholy"—a composition which, when it is played very slowly on the flute in bed, with the further disadvantage of being performed by a gentleman but imperfectly acquainted with the instrument, who repeats one note a great many times before he can find the next, has not a lively effect. Yet for half the night, or more, Mr. Swiveller, lying sometimes on his back with his eyes upon the ceiling, and sometimes half out of bed to correct himself by the book, played this unhappy tune over and over again; never leaving off, save for a minute or two at a time to take breath and soliloquize about the Marchioness, and then beginning again with renewed vigor.

It was not until he had quite exhausted his several subjects of meditation, and had breathed into the

flute the whole sentiment of the purl down to its very dregs, and had nearly maddened the people of the house, and at both the next doors, and over the way, that he shut up the music book, extinguished the candle, and, finding himself greatly lightened and relieved in his mind, turned round and fell asleep.

Dick continued his friendly relations toward the Marchioness, and when he fell ill with typhoid fever his little friend nursed him back to health. Just after this illness an aunt of his died and left him quite a large sum of money, a portion of which he used to educate the Marchioness, whom he afterward married.

—The Old Curiosity Shop

OLIVER TWIST

LITTLE OLIVER TWIST was an orphan. He never saw his mother or his father. He was born at the workhouse, where his poor, heart-broken mother had been taken just a short time before baby Oliver came; and the very night he was born she was so sick and weak that she said, "Let me see my child, and then I will die." The old nurse answered, "Nonsense, my dear; you must not think of dying; you have something now to live for."

The doctor said she must be very brave and she might get well. They brought her baby to her, and she hugged him in her weak arms and she kissed him many times and cuddled him up as close as her feeble arms could hold him; and then she looked at him long and steadily, and a sweet smile came over her face and a bright light came into her eyes, and before the smile could pass from her lips she died.

The old nurse wept as she took the baby from its dead mother's arms; and the doctor said, as he looked at her, "Poor, poor girl, she is so beautiful and so young! What strange fate has brought her to this poor place? Nurse, take good care of the baby, for his mother must have been a kind and gentle woman."

Nobody knew what the young mother's name was, and so this baby had no name, until, at last, Mr. Bumble, who was one of the parish officers, named him *Oliver Twist.*

When little Oliver Twist was nine months old they took him away from the workhouse and carried him to the "Poor Farm," where there were twenty-five or thirty other poor children who had no parents. Here Oliver remained until he was nine years old, though he was a little pale fellow and did not look more than seven.

Mr. Bumble came and said that the board (which meant the men in charge) had decided they must take Oliver away from the farm and carry him back to the workhouse. Oliver was sorry to leave; for, miserable as the place was, he dearly loved his little companions. They were all the people he knew; and he wept with sorrow as he told them good-by and was led by Mr. Bumble back to the workhouse, where he was born and where his mother had died nine years ago that very day.

When he got back there he found the old nurse who remembered his mother. She told him that his mother was a beautiful sweet woman and that she had kissed him and held him in her arms when she died. Night after night little Oliver dreamed about his beautiful mother, and she seemed sometimes to stand by his bed and to look down upon him with the same beautiful eyes and the same sweet smile of

which the nurse told him. Every time he had a chance, he asked questions about her, but the nurse could not tell him anything more. She did not even know her name.

Oliver had been at the workhouse only a very short time when Mr. Bumble came in and told him he must appear before the board at once. Now Oliver was puzzled at this. He thought a board was a piece of flat wood, and he could not imagine why he was to appear before that. But he was too much afraid to ask any questions. Mr. Bumble took him into a room where several stern-looking gentlemen sat at a long table. "Bow to the board," said Mr. Bumble to Oliver. Oliver looked about for a board, and seeing none he bowed to the table, because it looked more like a board than anything else.

The men laughed, and one in the white waistcoat said, "The boy is a fool. I thought he was." They told Oliver he was an orphan and they had supported him all his life. He ought to be very thankful. "Now," they said, "you are nine years old, and we must put you out to learn a trade." They told him he should begin the next morning at six o'clock to pick oakum, and work at that until they could get him a place.

Oliver was faithful at his work, in which several other boys assisted, but oh! how hungry they got, for they were given but one little bowl of gruel at a

meal, hardly enough for a kitten. One day the boys said they must ask for more, and they "drew straws" to see who should venture to do so. It fell to Oliver's lot to do it. The next meal, when they had emptied their bowls, Oliver walked up to the man who helped them and said very politely, "Please, sir, may I not have some more? I am very hungry." This made the man very angry and he called for Mr. Bumble. He came, and when told that Oliver had "asked for more," he grabbed him by the collar and took him before the board and made the complaint that he had been very naughty and rebellious. The board was angry at Oliver, and the man in the white waistcoat told them again the boy would be hanged, and they must get rid of him at once. So they offered the sum of five pounds to anyone who would take him.

The first man who came was a chimney sweeper. The board agreed to let him have Oliver; but, when they took him before the magistrates, Oliver fell on his knees and begged them not to let that man have him, and they would not, so Oliver was taken back to the workhouse.

The next man who came was Mr. Sowerberry, an undertaker. He was a good man, and the magistrates let him take Oliver along. But he had a stingy wife, and a disagreeable servant girl by the name of Charlotte, and a big, overbearing boy by the name of Noah Claypole, whom he had taken to

Oliver asks Mr. Bumble for more

raise. Oliver thought he would like Mr. Sowerberry well enough, but his heart fell when "the Mrs." met him and called him "boy" and a "measly-looking little pauper," and gave him for supper the scraps she had put up for the dog. But he hoped, by faithful work, to win kind treatment.

They made him sleep by himself in the shop, and he was very much frightened; but he thought he would rather sleep there than with that terrible boy, Noah. The first night he dreamed of his beautiful mother, and thought again he could see her with the same sweet smile upon her face. He was awakened the next morning by Noah, who told him he had to obey him, and he'd better look out or he'd wear the life out of him. Noah kicked and cuffed Oliver several times, but the poor boy was too much used to that to resent it, and determined to do his work well.

Mr. Sowerberry found Oliver so good, sensible, and polite that he made him his assistant and took him to all the funerals, and occasionally gave him a penny. Oliver went into fine houses and saw people and sights he had never dreamed of before. Mr. Sowerberry had told him he might some day be an undertaker himself; and Oliver worked hard to please his master, though Noah and Mrs. Sowerberry and Charlotte grew more unkind to him all the time, because "he was put forward," they said, "and Noah was kept back." This, of course, made Noah worse than ever to Oliver, though Charlotte did

sometimes try to make him less cruel, but Oliver determined to endure it all rather than complain, and try to win them over after awhile by being kind. He could have borne any insult to himself, but Noah tried the little fellow too far when he attacked the name of Oliver's mother, and it brought serious trouble, as we shall see.

One day, Oliver and Noah had descended into the kitchen at the usual dinner hour, when, Charlotte being called out of the way, there ensued a brief interval of time, which Noah Claypole, being hungry and vicious, considered he could not possibly devote to a worthier purpose than tantalizing young Oliver Twist.

Intent upon this innocent amusement, Noah put his feet on the tablecloth; and pulled Oliver's hair; and twitched his ears; and expressed his opinion that he was a "sneak." Furthermore he announced his intention of coming to see him hanged, whenever that desirable event should take place; and entered upon various other topics of petty annoyance, like a malicious and ill-conditioned charity boy as he was. But, none of these taunts producing the desired effect of making Oliver cry, Noah began to talk about his mother.

"Work'us," said Noah, "how's your mother?"

"She's dead," replied Oliver. "Don't you say anything about her to me!"

Oliver's color rose as he said this; he breathed

quickly; and there was a curious working of the mouth and nostrils, which Noah thought must be the immediate precursor of a violent fit of crying. Under this impression he returned to the charge.

"What did she die of, Work'us?" said Noah.

"Of a broken heart, some of our old nurses told me," replied Oliver; more as if he were talking to himself than answering Noah. "I think I know what it must be to die of that!"

"Tol de rol lol lol, right fol lairy, Work'us," said Noah, as a tear rolled down Oliver's cheek. "What's set you a-sniveling now?"

"Not *you*," replied Oliver, hastily brushing the tear away. "Don't think it."

"Oh, not me, eh?" sneered Noah.

"No, not you," replied Oliver, sharply. "There, that's enough. Don't say anything more to me about her; you'd better not!"

"Yer know, Work'us," continued Noah, emboldened by Oliver's silence, and speaking in a jeering tone of affected pity. "Yer know, Work'us, it can't be helped now; and of course yer couldn't help it then. But yer must know, Work'us, yer mother was a regular right-down bad 'un."

Crimson with fury, Oliver started up, overthrew the chair and table, seized Noah by the throat and shook him, in the violence of his rage, till his teeth chattered in his head. Then, collecting his whole force into one heavy blow, he felled him to the ground.

A minute before the boy had looked the quiet, mild, dejected creature that harsh treatment had made him. But his spirit was roused at last; the cruel insult to his dead mother had set his blood on fire. His breast heaved; his attitude was erect; his eye bright and vivid; his whole person changed, as he stood glaring over the cowardly tormentor who now lay crouching at his feet, and defied him with an energy he had never known before.

"He'll murder me!" blubbered Noah. "Charlotte! Missis! Here's the new boy a-murdering of me! Help! Help! Oliver's gone mad! Char—lotte!"

Noah's shouts were responded to by a loud scream from Charlotte and a louder from Mrs. Sowerberry, the former of whom rushed into the kitchen by a side door, while the latter paused on the staircase till she was quite certain that it was safe to come farther down. Between them they locked Oliver in a closet in the cellar and sent for Mr. Bumble.

That gentleman, being a great coward, did nothing but talk, so Oliver remained in the closet until Mr. Sowerberry came home. When he heard all the wild story told by the others, he gave Oliver a beating and left him locked for the day in the back kitchen with only bread and water for food. When night came and he was alone in the silence of the gloomy workshop of the undertaker, Oliver gave way to the feelings which the day's treatment may be supposed likely to have awakened in a mere child.

He had listened to their taunts with a look of contempt; he had borne the last without a cry; for he felt that pride swelling in his heart which would have kept down a shriek to the last. But now, when there was none to see or hear him, he fell upon his knees on the floor; and, hiding his face in his hands, wept bitter tears and prayed in his bleeding heart that God would help him to get away from these cruel people. There upon his knees, Oliver determined to run away, and, rising, tied up a few clothes in a handkerchief and went to bed.

With the first ray of light that struggled through the crevices in the shutters, Oliver arose and unbarred the door. One timid look around, one moment's pause of hesitation, he had closed it behind him, and was in the open street.

He looked to the right and to the left, uncertain which way to fly. He remembered to have seen the wagons, as they went out, toiling up the hill. He took the same route; and arriving at a footpath across the fields, which he knew, after some distance, led out again into the road, struck into it, and walked quickly on.

Along this same footpath, Oliver well remembered, he had trotted beside Mr. Bumble, when he first carried him to the workhouse from the farm. His heart beat quickly when he bethought himself of this, and he half resolved to turn back. He had come a long way though, and should lose a great

deal of time by doing so. Besides, it was so early that there was very little fear of his being seen; so he walked on.

He reached the house. There was no appearance of its inmates' stirring at that early hour. Oliver stopped, and peeped into the garden. A child was weeding one of the little beds; as he stopped, he raised his pale face and disclosed the features of one of his former companions. Oliver felt glad to see him before he went; for, though younger than himself, he had been his little friend and playmate. They had been beaten, and starved, and shut up together many and many a time.

"Hush, Dick!" said Oliver, as the boy ran to the gate, and thrust his thin arm between the rails to greet him. "Is anyone up?"

"Nobody but me," replied the child.

"You musn't say you saw me, Dick," said Oliver. "I am running away. They beat and ill-use me, Dick; and I am going to seek my fortune some long way off. I don't know where. How pale you are!"

"I heard the doctor tell them I was dying," replied the child, with a faint smile. "I am very glad to see you, dear; but don't stop, don't stop!"

"Yes, yes, I will, to say good-by, to you," replied Oliver. "I shall see you again, Dick. I know I shall. You will be well and happy."

"I hope so," replied the child, "after I am dead, but not before. I know the doctor must be right, Oliver, because I dream so much of heaven, and angels, and kind faces that I never see when I am awake. Kiss me," said the child, climbing up the low gate, and flinging his little arms around Oliver's neck. "Good-by, dear! God bless you!"

The blessing was from a young child's lips, but it was the first that Oliver had ever heard invoked upon his head; and through the struggles and sufferings, and troubles and changes of his after-life, he never once forgot it.

Oliver soon got into the highroad. It was eight o'clock now. Though he was nearly five miles away from the town, he ran, and hid behind the hedges, by turns, till noon, fearing that he might be pursued and overtaken. Then he sat down to rest by the side of the milestone.

The stone by which he was seated had a sign on it which said that it was just seventy miles from that spot to London. The name awakened a new train of ideas in the boy's mind. London—that great, large place! Nobody, not even Mr. Bumble, could ever find him there! He had often heard the old men in the workhouse, too, say that no lad of spirit need want in London; and that there were ways of living in that vast city which those who had been bred in the country parts had no idea of. It was the very place for a homeless boy, who must die in the

streets unless someone helped him. As these things passed through his thoughts, he jumped up on his feet and again walked forward.

He had diminished the distance between himself and London by full four miles more, before he recollected how much he must undergo ere he could hope to reach his place of destination. As this consideration forced itself upon him, he slackened his pace a little, and meditated upon his means of getting there. He had a crust of bread, a coarse shirt, and two pairs of stockings in his bundle. He had a penny, too—a gift of Sowerberry's after some funeral in which he had acquitted himself more than ordinarily well—in his pocket. "A clean shirt," thought Oliver, "is a very comfortable thing; and so are two pairs of darned stockings; and so is a penny; but they are small helps to a sixty-five miles' walk in winter time."

Day after day the weary but plucky boy walked on, and early on the seventh morning after he had left his native place, Oliver limped slowly into the little town of Barnet, and sat down on a door step to rest. Some few stopped to gaze at Oliver for a moment or two, or turned round to stare at him as they hurried by; but none relieved him, or troubled themselves to inquire how he came there. He had no heart to beg. And there he sat for some time, when he was roused by observing that a boy was watching him most earnestly from the opposite side

of the way. He took little heed of this at first; but the boy remained in the same attitude so long that Oliver raised his head and returned his steady look. Upon this, the boy crossed over, and, walking close up to Oliver, said:

"Hullo, my covey! What's the row?"

The boy who addressed this inquiry to the young wayfarer was about his own age, but one of the queerest-looking boys that Oliver had ever seen. He was a snub-nosed, flat-browed, common-faced boy enough, and as dirty a juvenile as one would wish to see; but he had about him all the airs and manners of a man. He was short for his age; with rather bowlegs, and little, sharp, ugly eyes. His hat was stuck on the top of his head so lightly that it threatened to fall off every moment. He wore a man's coat, which reached nearly to his heels.

"Hullo, my covey! What's the row?" said the stranger.

"I am very hungry and tired," replied Oliver; the tears standing in his eyes as he spoke. "I have walked a long way. I have been walking these seven days."

"Walking for sivin days!" said the young gentleman. "Oh, I see. Beak's order, eh! But," he added, noticing Oliver's look of surprise, "I suppose you don't know what a beak is, my flash com-pan-i-on."

Oliver mildly replied that he had always heard a bird's mouth described by the word beak.

"My eyes, how green!" exclaimed the young gentleman. "Why, a beak's a madgst'rate; and when you walk by a beak's order, it's not straight forerd.

"But come," said the young gentleman, "you want grub, and you shall have it. Up with you on your pins. There! Now then!"

Assisting Oliver to rise, the young gentleman took him to an adjacent grocery store, where he purchased a sufficiency of ready-dressed ham and a half-quartern loaf, or, as he himself expressed it, "a fourpenny bran!" Taking the bread under his arm, the young gentleman turned into a small public-house, and led the way to a taproom in the rear of the premises. Here a pot of beer was brought in by direction of the mysterious youth; and Oliver, falling to at his new friend's bidding, made a long and hearty meal, during which the strange boy eyed him from time to time with great attention.

"Going to London?" said the strange boy, when Oliver had at length concluded.

"Yes."

"Got any lodgings?"

"No."

"Money?"

"No."

The strange boy whistled, and put his arms into his pockets as far as the big coat sleeves would let them go.

"Do you live in London?" inquired Oliver.

"Yes, I do, when I'm at home," replied the boy. "I suppose you want some place to sleep in to-night, don't you?"

"I do, indeed," answered Oliver. "I have not slept under a roof since I left the country."

"Don't fret your eyelids on that score," said the young gentleman. "I've got to be in London to-night: and I know a 'spectable old genelman as lives there, wot'll give you lodgings fer nothink, and never ask for the change; that is, if any gentleman he knows interduces you. And don't he know me? Oh, no! not in the least! By no means. Certainly not!" which was his queer way of saying that he and the old gentleman were good friends.

This unexpected offer of shelter was too tempting to be resisted, especially as it was immediately followed up by the assurance that the old gentleman referred to would doubtless provide Oliver with a comfortable place, without loss of time. This led to a more friendly and confidential dialogue; from which Oliver discovered that his friend's name was Jack Dawkins—among his intimate friends better known as the "Artful Dodger"—and that he was a peculiar pet and protégé of the elderly gentleman before mentioned.

As John Dawkins objected to their entering London before nightfall, it was nearly eleven o'clock when they reached the small city street, along which

the Dodger scudded at a rapid pace, directing Oliver to follow close at his heels.

Although Oliver had enough to occupy his attention in keeping sight of his leader, he could not help bestowing a few hasty glances on either side of the way as he passed along. A dirtier or more wretched place he had never seen.

Oliver was just considering whether he hadn't better run away, when they reached the bottom of the hill. His conductor, catching him by the arm, pushed open the door of a house, and, drawing him into the passage, closed it behind them.

"Now, then!" cried a voice from below, in reply to a whistle from the Dodger.

"Plummy and Slam!" was the reply.

This seemed to be some watchword or signal that all was right, for the light of a feeble candle gleamed on the wall at the remote end of the passage, and a man's face peeped out from where a balustrade of the old kitchen staircase had been broken away.

"There's two of you," said the man, thrusting the candle farther out, and shading his eyes with his hand. "Who's t'other one?"

"A new pal," replied Jack Dawkins, pulling Oliver forward.

"Where did he come from?"

"Greenland. Is Fagin upstairs?"

"Yes; he's a-sortin' the wipes. Up with you!" The candle was drawn back, and the face disappeared.

Oliver, groping his way with one hand, and having the other firmly grasped by his companion, ascended with much difficulty the dark and broken stairs, which his conductor mounted with an ease and expedition that showed he was well acquainted with them. He threw open the door of a back room, and drew Oliver in after him.

The walls and ceiling of the room were perfectly black with age and dirt. There was a deal table before the fire, upon which were a candle stuck in a ginger-beer bottle, two or three pewter pots, a loaf and butter, and a plate. Seated round the table were four or five boys, none older than the Dodger, smoking long clay pipes and drinking spirits, with the air of middle-aged men. These all crowded about their associate as he whispered a few words to the proprietor; and then turned round and grinned at Oliver. So did the man himself, toasting fork in hand.

"This is him, Fagin," said Jack Dawkins, "my friend, Oliver Twist."

Fagin grinned, and, making a low obeisance to Oliver, took him by the hand, and hoped he should have the honor of his intimate acquaintance. Upon this, the young gentlemen with the pipes came round him and shook both his hands very hard.

"We are very glad to see you, Oliver, very," said Fagin. "Dodger, take off the sausages, and draw a tub near the fire for Oliver. Ah! you're a-staring at

the pocket handkerchiefs, eh, my dear? There are a good many of 'em, ain't there? We've just looked 'em out, ready for the wash; that's all, Oliver—that's all. Ha! ha! ha!"

The latter part of this speech was hailed by a boisterous shout from all the pupils of the merry old gentleman, in the midst of which they went to supper.

Oliver ate his share, and immediately afterward he felt himself gently lifted on to one of the sacks; and then he sunk into a deep sleep.

It was late next morning when Oliver awoke from a sound, long sleep. There was no other person in the room but Fagin, who was boiling some coffee in a saucepan for breakfast, and whistling softly to himself as he stirred it round and round with an iron spoon. He would stop every now and then to listen when there was the least noise below; and when he had satisfied himself, he would go on, whistling and stirring again, as before. Presently Oliver asked if he might get up.

"Certainly, my dear, certainly," replied the old gentleman. "There's a pitcher of water in the corner by the door. Bring it here, and I'll give you a basin to wash in, my dear."

He had scarcely washed himself, and made everything tidy by emptying the basin out of the window, agreeably to Fagin's directions, when the Dodger returned, accompanied by a very sprightly young

friend, whom Oliver had seen smoking on the previous night, and who was now formally introduced to him as Charley Bates. The four sat down to breakfast on the coffee and some hot rolls and ham which the Dodger had brought home in the crown of his hat.

"Well," said Fagin, glancing slyly at Oliver, and addressing himself to the Dodger, "I hope you've been at work this morning, my dears."

"Hard," replied the Dodger.

"As nails," added Charley Bates.

"Good boys, good boys!" said Fagin. "What have *you*, Dodger?"

"A couple of pocketbooks," replied that young gentleman.

"Lined?" inquired Fagin, with eagerness.

"Pretty well," replied the Dodger, producing two pocketbooks.

"Not so heavy as they might be," said Fagin after looking at the insides carefully, "but very neat and nicely made. Ingenious workman, ain't he, Oliver?"

"Very, indeed, sir," said Oliver. At which Mr. Charles Bates laughed uproariously, very much to the amazement of Oliver, who saw nothing to laugh at in anything that had passed.

"And what have you got, my dear?" said Fagin to Charley Bates.

"Wipes," replied Master Bates; at the same time producing four pocket handkerchiefs.

"Well," said Fagin, inspecting them closely, "they're very good ones, very. You haven't marked them well, though, Charley; so the marks shall be picked out with a needle, and we'll teach Oliver how to do it. Shall us, Oliver, eh? Ha! ha! ha!"

"If you please, sir," said Oliver.

"You'd like to be able to make pocket handkerchiefs as easy as Charley Bates, wouldn't you, my dear?" said Fagin.

"Very much, indeed, if you'll teach me, sir," replied Oliver.

Master Bates burst into another laugh.

"He is so jolly green!" said Charley when he recovered, as an apology to the company for his unpolite behavior.

The Dodger said nothing, but he smoothed Oliver's hair over his eyes, and said he'd know better by and by.

When the breakfast was cleared away, the merry old gentleman and the two boys played at a very curious and uncommon game, which was performed in this way: the merry old gentleman, placing a snuffbox in one pocket of his trousers, a note case in the other, and a watch in his waistcoat pocket, with a guard chain round his neck, and sticking a mock-diamond pin in his shirt, buttoned his coat tight round him, and putting his spectacle case and handkerchief in his pockets, trotted up and down the room with a stick, in imitation of the manner in

which old gentlemen walk about the streets any hour in the day.

Now during all this time the two boys followed him closely about, getting out of his sight so nimbly every time he turned round that it was impossible to follow their motions. At last the Dodger trod upon his toes or ran upon his boot accidentally, while Charlie Bates stumbled up against him behind; and in that one moment they took from him, with the most extraordinary rapidity, snuffbox, note case, watch guard, chain, shirt pin, pocket handkerchief, even the spectacle case. If the old gentleman felt a hand in any one of his pockets, he cried out where it was, and then the game began all over again.

When this game had been played a great many times, Charley Bates expressed it as his opinion that it was time to pad the hoof. This, it occurred to Oliver, must be French for going out; for, directly afterward, the Dodger and Charley went away together, having been kindly furnished by Fagin with money to spend.

"There, my dear," said Fagin. "That's a pleasant life, isn't it? They have gone out for the day."

"Have they done work, sir?" inquired Oliver.

"Yes," said the old man; "that is, unless they should unexpectedly come across any when they are out; and they won't neglect it if they do, my dear, depend upon it. Make 'em your models, my dear.

make 'em your models," tapping the fire shovel on the hearth to add force to his words. "Do everything they bid you, and take their advice in all matters, especially the Dodger, my dear. He'll be a great man himself, and will make you one, too, if you take pattern by him. Is my handkerchief hanging out of my pocket, my dear?" said he, stopping short.

"Yes, sir," said Oliver.

"See if you can take it out, without my feeling it, as you saw them do when we were at play this morning."

Oliver held up the bottom of the pocket with one hand, as he had seen the Dodger hold it, and drew the handkerchief lightly out with the other.

"Is it gone?" cried Fagin.

"Here it is, sir," said Oliver, showing it in his hand.

"You're a clever boy, my dear," said the playful old gentleman, patting Oliver on the head approvingly. "I never saw a sharper lad. Here's a shilling for you. If you go on in this way, you'll be the greatest man of the time. And now come here and I'll show you how to take the marks out of the handkerchief."

Oliver wondered what picking the old gentleman's pocket in play had to do with his chances of being a great man. But, thinking that Fagin, being so much his senior, must know best, he followed

him quietly to the table, and was soon deeply involved in his new study.

For many days Oliver remained in the room, picking the marks out of the pocket handkerchiefs (of which a great number were brought home) and sometimes taking part in the game already described, which the two boys and Fagin played, regularly, every morning.

At length, one morning, Oliver obtained permission to go out with the boys. There had been no handkerchiefs to work upon for two or three days, and the dinners had been rather meager. Perhaps these were reasons for the old gentleman's giving his assent; but, whether they were or not, he told Oliver he might go, and placed him under the joint guardianship of Charley Bates and his friend, the Dodger.

The three boys started out; the Dodger with his coat sleeves tucked up and his hat cocked, as usual; Master Bates sauntering along with his hands in his pockets; and Oliver between them, wondering where they were going, and what they would teach him to make first.

They were just coming from a narrow court not far from an open square, which is yet called "The Green," when the Dodger made a sudden stop, and, laying his finger on his lip, drew his companions back again, with the greatest caution.

"What's the matter?" demanded Oliver.

"Hush!" replied the Dodger. "Do you see that old cove at the book stall?"

"The old gentleman over the way?" said Oliver. "Yes, I see him."

"He'll do," said the Dodger.

"A prime plant," observed Master Charley Bates.

Oliver looked from one to the other with the greatest surprise, but he was not permitted to make any inquiries; for the two boys walked stealthily across the road and slunk close behind the old gentleman. Oliver walked a few paces after them, and, not knowing whether to advance or retire, stood looking on in silent amazement.

The old gentleman was a very respectable-looking personage, with a powdered head and gold spectacles, as he stood reading a book. What was Oliver's horror and alarm as he stood a few paces off, looking on with his eyelids as wide open as they would possibly go, to see the Dodger plunge his hand into the old gentleman's pocket and draw from thence a handkerchief; and then to see him hand the same to Charley Bates; and finally to behold them both running away round the corner.

In an instant the whole mystery of the handkerchiefs rushed upon the boy's mind. He stood, for a moment, with the blood so tingling through all his veins from terror that he felt as if he were in a burning fire; then, confused and frightened, he, too, took to

his heels, and, not knowing what he did, made off as fast as he could lay his feet to the ground.

This was all done in a minute's space. In the very instant when Oliver began to run, the old gentleman, putting his hand to his pocket, and missing his handkerchief, turned sharp around. Seeing the boy scudding away at such a rapid pace, he very naturally concluded him to be the thief, and, shouting, "Stop, thief!" with all his might, made off after him, book in hand.

But the old gentleman was not the only person who raised the hue and cry. The Dodger and Master Bates, unwilling to attract public attention by running down the open street, had merely retired into the very first doorway round the corner. They no sooner heard the cry, and saw Oliver running, than, guessing exactly how the matter stood, they issued forth with great promptitude; and shouting, "Stop, thief!" too, joined in the pursuit like good citizens.

Away they run, pell-mell, helter-skelter, slapdash; tearing, yelling, screaming, knocking down the passengers as they turn the corners, rousing up the dogs, and astonishing the fowls; and making streets, squares, and courts reecho with the sound.

At last a burly fellow struck Oliver a terrible blow and he went down upon the pavement. The crowd eagerly gathered around him, each newcomer jostling and struggling with the others to catch a glimpse. "Stand aside!" "Give him a little air!"

"Nonsense! he don't deserve it!" "Where's the gentleman?" "Here he is, coming down the street." "Make room there for the gentleman!" "Is this the boy, sir?"

Oliver lay, covered with mud and dust, and bleeding from the mouth, looking wildly round upon the heap of faces that surrounded him, when the old gentleman was officiously dragged and pushed into the circle by the foremost of the pursuers.

"Yes," said the gentleman, "I am afraid it is the boy."

"Afraid!" murmured the crowd. "That's a good un!"

"Poor fellow!" said the gentleman, "he has hurt himself."

"I did that, sir," said a great, lubberly fellow, stepping forward, "and preciously I cut my knuckle agin his mouth. I stopped him, sir."

The fellow touched his hat with a grin, expecting something for his pains; but the old gentleman, eying him with an expression of dislike, looked anxiously round, as if he contemplated running away himself: which it is very possible he might have attempted to do, and thus have afforded another chase, had not a police officer (who is generally the last person to arrive in such cases) at that moment made his way through the crowd, and seized Oliver by the collar.

"Come, get up," said the man roughly.

"It wasn't me, indeed, sir. Indeed, indeed, it was two other boys," said Oliver, clasping his hands passionately and looking round. "They are here somewhere."

"Oh, no, they ain't," said the officer. He meant this to be ironical, but it was true besides; for the Dodger and Charley Bates had filed off down the first convenient court they came to. "Come, get up!"

"Don't hurt him," said the old man compassionately.

"Oh, no, I won't hurt him," replied the officer. "Come, I know you; it won't do. Will you stand upon your legs, you young devil?"

Oliver, who could hardly stand, made a shift to raise himself on his feet, and was at once lugged along the streets by the jacket collar at a rapid pace. The gentleman walked on with them by the officer's side.

At last they came to a place called Mutton Hill. Here he was led beneath a low archway, and up a dirty court, where they saw a stout man with a bunch of whiskers on his face and a bunch of keys in his hand.

"What's the matter now?" said the man carelessly.

"A young fogle hunter," replied the officer who had Oliver in charge.

"Are you the party that's been robbed, sir?" inquired the man with the keys.

"Yes, I am," replied the old gentleman, "but I am not sure that this boy actually took the handkerchief. I would rather not press the case."

"Must go before the magistrate now, sir," replied the man. "His worship will be disengaged in half a minute. Now, young gallows!"

This was an invitation for Oliver to enter through a door which he unlocked as he spoke, and which led into a stone cell. Here he was searched, and, nothing being found upon him, locked up.

The old gentleman looked almost as unhappy as Oliver when the key grated in the lock.

At last the gentleman, Mr. Brownlow, by name, was summoned before the magistrate. Oliver was brought in, and the magistrate ordered the policeman to tell what happened.

The policeman related how he had taken the boy; how he had searched Oliver, and found nothing on his person; and how that was all he knew about it.

"Are there any witnesses?" inquired the magistrate.

Mr. Brownlow stated his case, observing that, in the surprise of the moment, he had run after the boy because he saw him running away.

"He has been hurt already," said the old gentleman, in conclusion. "And I fear," he added, with great energy, looking toward the bar, "I really fear that he is ill."

"Oh! yes, I dare say!" said the magistrate. "Come, you young vagabond. What's your name?"

Oliver tried to reply, but his tongue failed him. He was deadly pale; and the whole place seemed turning round and round. As he fell fainting to the floor an elderly man of decent but poor appearance, clad in an old suit of black, rushed in.

"Stop! stop! Don't take him away! For heaven's sake, stop a moment!" cried the newcomer, breathless with haste.

"What is this? Who is this?" cried the magistrate.

"I *will* speak," cried the man. "I saw it all. I keep the book stall. I demand to be sworn. I will not be put down. You must hear me, sir."

The man was right. His manner was determined; and the matter was growing rather too serious to be hushed up.

"Swear the man," growled the magistrate. "Now, man, what have you got to say?"

"This," said the man. "I saw three boys, two others and the prisoner here, loitering on the opposite side of the way, when this gentleman was reading. The robbery was committed by another boy. I saw it done; and I saw this boy was perfectly amazed and stupefied by it."

"Why didn't you come here before?" said the magistrate, after a pause.

"I hadn't a soul to mind the shop," replied the man. "Everybody who could have helped me had joined in the pursuit. I could get nobody till five minutes ago; and I have run here all the way to speak the truth."

"The boy is discharged. Clear the office!" shouted the irate magistrate.

The mandate was obeyed; and as Oliver was taken out he fainted away again in the yard, and lay with his face a deadly white and a cold tremble convulsing his frame.

"Poor boy! poor boy!" said Mr. Brownlow, bending over him. "Call a coach, somebody, pray. Directly!"

A coach was obtained, and Oliver, having been carefully laid on one seat, the old gentleman got in and sat himself on the other.

"May I accompany you?" said the book-stall keeper, looking in.

"Bless me, yes, my dear sir," said Mr. Brownlow quickly. "I forgot you. Dear, dear! I have this unhappy book still! Jump in. Poor fellow! There's no time to lose."

The book-stall keeper got into the coach, and it rattled away. It stopped at length before a neat house, in a quiet, shady street. Here a bed was prepared, without loss of time, in which Mr. Brownlow saw his young charge carefully and comfortably deposited; and here he was

tended with a kindness and solicitude that knew no bounds.

At last the sick boy began to recover, and one day Mr. Brownlow came in to see him. You may imagine how happy Oliver was to see his good benefactor; but he was no more delighted than was Mr. Brownlow. The old gentleman came to spend a short time with him every day; and, when he grew stronger, Oliver went up to the learned gentleman's study and talked with him by the hour and was astonished at the books he saw, which Mr. Brownlow told him to look at and read as much as he liked.

Oliver was soon well, and no thought was in Mr. Brownlow's mind but that he should keep him, and raise him and educate him to be a splendid man; for no father loves his own son better than Mr. Brownlow had come to love Oliver.

—*Oliver Twist*

THE FAT BOY

JOE, generally known as "the fat boy," was a servant of an old country gentleman named Wardle. Mr. Pickwick, of London, and three others of his literary club, were traveling in search of adventure. With Mr. Pickwick, the founder and head of the Pickwick club, were Mr. Tupman, whose great weakness for the ladies brought him frequent troubles, Mr. Winkle, whose desire to appear as a sport brought much ridicule upon himself, and Mr. Snodgrass, whose poetic temperament induced him to write many romantic verses which amused his friends and all who read them. These four Pickwickians were introduced one day to Mr. Wardle, his aged sister Miss Rachel Wardle, and his two daughters, Emily and Isabella, as they were observing some army reviews from their coach. Mr. Wardle hospitably asked Mr. Pickwick and his friends to join them in the coach.

"Come up here, Mr. Pickwick," said Mr. Wardle, "come along, sir. Joe! Drat that boy! He's gone to sleep again. Joe, let down the steps and open the carriage door. Come ahead, room for two of you inside and one outside. Joe, make room for one Put this gentleman on the box!" Mr. Winkle

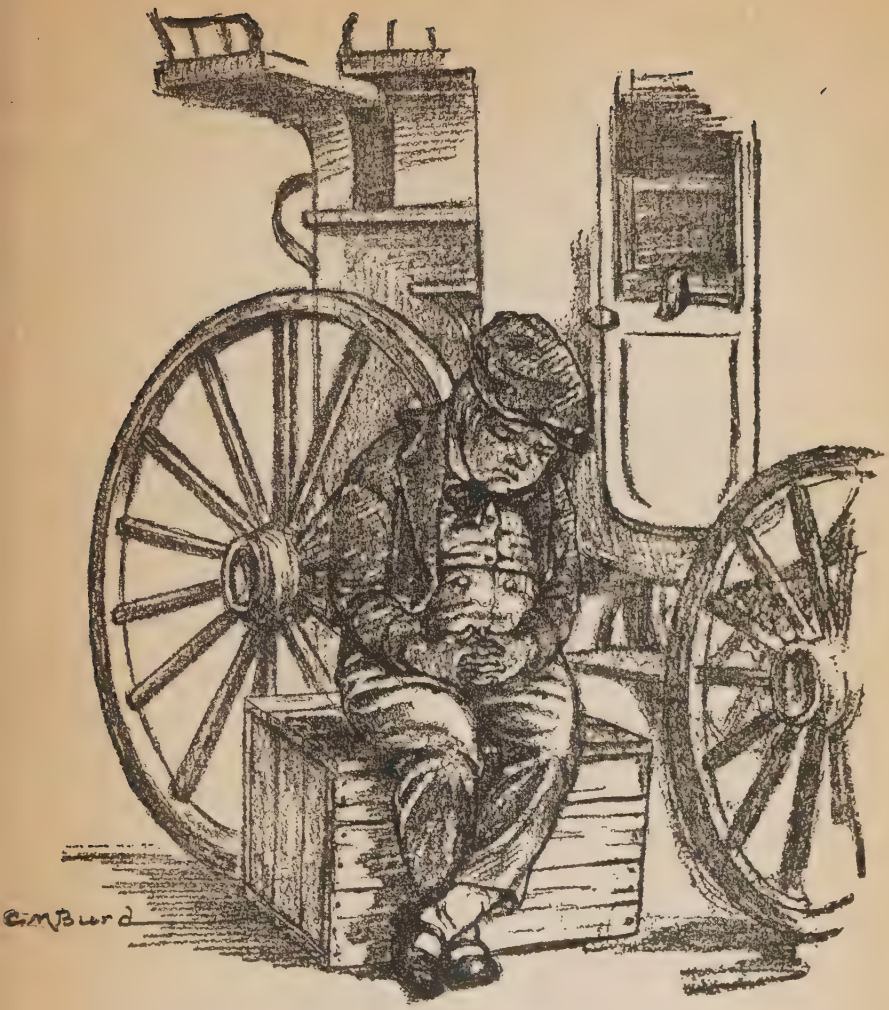
mounted with a little help, and the fat boy, where he was, fell fast asleep.

One rank of soldiers after another passed, firing over the heads of another rank, and when the cannon went off the air resounded with the screams of ladies. Mr. Snodgrass actually found it necessary to support one of the Misses Wardle with his arm. Their maidenly aunt was in such a dreadful state of nervous alarm that Mr. Tupman found that *he* was obliged to put his arm about *her* waist to keep her up at all. Everyone was excited, with the exception of the fat boy, and he slept as soundly as if the roaring of cannon were his ordinary lullaby.

"Joe! Joe!" called Mr. Wardle. "Drat that boy! He's gone to sleep again. Pinch him in the leg, if you please. Nothing else wakens him. Thank you. Get out the lunch, Joe." The fat boy, who had been effectually aroused by Mr. Winkle, proceeded to unpack the hamper with more quickness than could have been expected from his previous inactivity.

"Now Joe, knives and forks." The knives and forks were handed in, and each one was furnished with these useful implements.

"Now Joe, the fowls. Drat that boy! He's gone asleep again. Joe! Joe!" Numerous taps on the head with a stick, and the fat boy with some difficulty was awakened. "Go hand in the eatables." There was something in the sound of the last word which aroused him. He jumped up with reddened



The Fat Boy takes another nap

eyes which twinkled behind his mountainous cheeks, and feasted upon the food as he unpacked it from the basket.

"Now make haste," said Mr. Wardle, for the fat boy was hanging fondly over a chicken which he seemed wholly unable to part with. The boy sighed deeply, and casting an ardent gaze upon its plumpness, unwillingly handed it to his master.

"A very extraordinary boy, that," said Mr. Pickwick. "Does he always sleep in this way?"

"Sleep!" said the old gentleman. "He's always sleeping. Goes on errands fast asleep and snores as he waits at table."

"How very odd," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Ah! odd indeed," returned the old gentleman. "I'm proud of that boy. Wouldn't part with him on any account. He's a natural curiosity. Here, Joe, take these things away and open another bottle. Do you hear?" The fat boy aroused, opened his eyes, started and finished the piece of pie he was in the act of eating when he last fell asleep, and slowly obeyed his master's orders, looking intently upon the remains of the feast as he removed the plates and stowed them in the hamper. At last Mr. Wardle and his party mounted the coach and prepared to drive off.

"Now mind," he said as he shook hands with Mr. Pickwick, "we expect to see you all tomorrow. You have the address?"

"Manor Farm, Dingley Dell," said Mr. Pickwick, consulting his pocketbook.

"That's it," said the old gentleman. "You must come for at least a week. If you are traveling to get country life, come to me and I will give you plenty of it. Joe! Drat that boy, he's gone to sleep again. Help put in the horses." The horses were put in, and the driver mounted, and that boy clambered up by his side. The farewells were exchanged and the carriage rolled off. As the Pickwickians turned around to take a last glimpse of it, the setting sun cast a red gold upon the faces of their entertainers, and fell upon the form of the fat boy. His head was sunk upon his bosom, and he slumbered again.

Presently Mr. Pickwick and his friends arrived safely at the country home of Mr. Wardle. The time passed very pleasantly.

One day some of the men decided upon a shooting trip, and Mr. Winkle, to maintain his reputation as a sport, did not admit that he knew nothing about guns. Mr. Pickwick, early in the morning, seeing Mr. Winkle carrying a gun, asked what they were going to do.

"Why, your friend and I are going out rook shooting. He's a very good shot, isn't he?" said Mr. Wardle.

"I have heard him say he's a capital one," replied Mr. Pickwick, "but I never saw him aim at anything."

"Well," said the host, "I wish Mr. Tupman would join us. Joe! Joe!" The fat boy who, under the exciting influences of the morning, did not appear to be more than three parts and a fraction asleep, emerged from the house. "Go up and call Mr. Tupman, and tell him he will find us waiting." At last the party started, Mr. Tupman having joined them. Some boys who were with them discovered a tree with a nest in one of the branches and, when all was ready, Mr. Wardle was persuaded to shoot first. The boys shouted, and shook a branch with a nest on it, and a half-a-dozen young rooks, in violent conversation, flew out to ask what the matter was. Mr. Wardle leveled his gun and fired; down fell one and off flew the others.

"Pick him up, Joe," said the old gentleman. There was a smile upon the youth's face as he advanced, for an indistinct vision of rook pie floated through his imagination. He laughed as he retired with the bird. It was a plump one.

"Now, Mr. Winkle," said the host, reloading his own gun, "fire away." Mr. Winkle advanced and raised his gun. Mr. Pickwick and his friends crouched involuntarily to escape damage from the heavy fall of birds which they felt quite certain would be caused by their friend's skill. There was a solemn pause, a shout, a flapping of wings.

Mr. Winkle closed his eyes and fired; there was a scream from an individual, not a rook. Mr. Tup-

man had saved the lives of innumerable birds by receiving a portion of the charge in his left arm. Though it was a very slight wound, Mr. Tupman made a great fuss about it and everyone was horror-stricken. He was partly carried to the house. The spinster aunt uttered a piercing scream, burst into an hysterical laugh and fell backward into the arms of her nieces. She recovered, screamed again, laughed again and fainted again.

"Calm yourself," said Mr. Tupman, affected almost to tears by this expression of sympathy. "Dear, dear Madam, calm yourself."

"You are not dead?" exclaimed the hysterical lady. "Say you are not dead!"

"Don't be a fool, Rachel," said Mr. Wardle. "What the mischief is the use of his saying he isn't dead?"

"No! No! I am not," said Mr. Tupman. "I require no assistance but yours. Let me lean on your arm," he added in a whisper. Miss Rachel advanced and offered her arm. They turned into the breakfast parlor. Mr. Tupman gently pressed her hands to his lips and sunk upon the sofa. Presently the others left him to her tender mercies. That afternoon Mr. Tupman, much affected by the extreme tenderness of Miss Rachel, suggested that as he was feeling much better they take a short stroll in the garden. There was a bower at the farther end, all honeysuckles and creeping plants, and some-

how they unconsciously wandered in its direction and sat down on a bench within.

"Miss Wardle," said Mr. Tupman, "you are an angel." Miss Rachel blushed very becomingly. Much more conversation of this nature followed until finally Mr. Tupman proceeded to do what his enthusiastic emotions prompted and what were (for all we know, for we are but little acquainted with such matters) what people in such circumstances always do. She started, and he, throwing his arms around her neck, imprinted upon her lips numerous kisses, which, after a proper show of struggling and resistance, she received so passively that there is no telling how many more Mr. Tupman might have bestowed if the lady had not given a very unaffected start and exclaimed, "Mr. Tupman, we are observed! We are discovered!"

Mr. Tupman looked around. There was the fat boy perfectly motionless, with his large, circular eyes staring into the arbor, but without the slightest expression on his face. Mr. Tupman gazed at the fat boy and the fat boy stared at him, but the longer Mr. Tupman observed the utter vacancy of the fat boy's face, the more convinced he became that he either did not know or did not understand anything that had been happening. Under this impression he said with great fierceness, "What do you want here?"

"Supper is ready, sir," was the prompt reply.

"Have you just come here?" inquired Mr. Tupman with a piercing look.

"Just," replied the fat boy. Mr. Tupman looked at him very hard again but there was not a wink of his eye or a movement in his face. Mr. Tupman took the arm of the spinster aunt and walked toward the house. The fat boy followed behind.

"He knows nothing of what has happened," he whispered.

"Nothing," said the spinster aunt. There was a sound behind them as of an imperfectly suppressed chuckle. Mr. Tupman turned sharply around.

No, it could not have been the fat boy. There was not a gleam of mirth or anything but feeding in his whole visage. "He must have been fast asleep," whispered Mr. Tupman.

"I have not the least doubt of it," replied Miss Rachel, and they both laughed heartily. Mr. Tupman was wrong. The fat boy for once had not been fast asleep. He was awake, wide awake to everything that had happened.

The day following, Joe saw his mistress, Mr. Wardle's aged mother, sitting in the arbor. Without saying a word he walked up to her, stood perfectly still and said nothing.

The old lady was easily frightened; most old ladies are, and her first impression was that Joe was about to do her some bodily harm with a view of stealing what money she might have with her. She

therefore watched his motions, or rather lack of motions, with feelings of intense terror, which were in no degree lessened by his finally coming close to her and shouting in her ear, for she was very deaf, "Missus!"

"Well, Joe," said the trembling old lady, "I am sure I have been a good mistress to you." He nodded. "You have always been treated very kindly?" He nodded. "You have never had too much to do?" He nodded. "You have always had enough to eat?" This last was an appeal to the fat boy's most sensitive feelings. He seemed touched as he replied, "I know I has."

"Then what do you want to do now?"

"I wants to make yo' flesh creep," replied the boy. This sounded like a very bloodthirsty method of showing one's gratitude, and so the old lady was as much frightened as before. "What do you think I saw in this very arbor last night?" inquired the boy.

"Mercies, what?" screamed the old lady, alarmed at the mysterious manner of the corpulent youth.

"A strange gentleman as had his arm around her, a kissin' and huggin'."

"Who, Joe, who? None of the servants, I hope?"

"Worser than that," roared the fat boy in the old lady's ear.

"None of my granddaughters?"

"Worser than that," said Joe.

"Worse than that?" said the old lady, who had thought this the extreme limit. "Who was it, Joe? I insist upon knowing!"

The fat boy looked cautiously about and having finished his survey, shouted in the old lady's ear, "Miss Rachel!"

"What?" said the old lady in a shrill tone. "Speak louder!"

"Miss Rachel," roared the fat boy.

"My daughter?" The succession of nods which the fat boy gave by way of assent could not be doubted. "And she allowed him?" exclaimed the old lady. A grin stole over the fat boy's features as he said, "I see her a-kissin' of him agin!" Joe's voice of necessity had been so loud that another party in the garden could not help hearing the entire conversation. If they could have seen the expression of the old lady's face at this time it is probable that a sudden burst of laughter would have betrayed them. Fragments of angry sentences drifted to them through the leaves, such as "Without my permission!" "At her time of life!" "Might have waited until I was dead," etc. Then they heard the heels of the fat boy's feet crunching the gravel as he retired and left the old lady alone.

Mr. Tupman would probably have found himself in considerable trouble if one of his friends, who had overheard the conversation, had not told Mrs. Wardle that perhaps Joe had dreamed the entire

incident, which did not seem altogether improbable. She watched Mr. Tupman at supper that evening, but this gentleman, having been warned, paid no attention whatever to Miss Rachel, and the old lady was finally persuaded that it was all a mistake.

Finally the visit of Mr. Pickwick and his friends came to an end, and it was several months before they again partook of Mr. Wardle's hospitality. The Pickwickians had arrived at the Inn near Mr. Wardle's place for dinner before completing the rest of their journey to Dingley Dell. Mr. Pickwick had brought with him several barrels of oysters and some special wine as a gift to his host, and he stood examining his packages to see that they had all arrived when he felt himself gently pulled by the skirts of his coat. Looking around he discovered that the individual who resorted to this means of drawing his attention was no other than Mr. Wardle's favorite page, the fat boy.

"Aha!" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Ah!" said the fat boy, and as he said it he glanced from the wine to the oysters and chuckled joyously. He was fatter than ever.

"Well, you look rosy enough, my young friend," said Mr. Pickwick.

"I have been sitting in front of the fire," replied the fat boy, who had indeed heated himself to the color of a new chimney pot in the course of an hour's nap. "Master sent me over with the cart to carry

your luggage over to the house." Mr. Pickwick called his man, Sam Weller, to him and said, "Help Mr. Wardle's servant to put the packages into the cart and then ride on with him. We prefer to walk." Having given this direction, Mr. Pickwick and his three friends walked briskly away, leaving Mr. Weller and the fat boy face to face for the first time. Sam looked at the fat boy with great astonishment, but without saying a word, and began to put the things rapidly upon the cart while Joe stood calmly by and seemed to think it a very interesting sort of thing to see Mr. Weller working by himself.

"There," said Sam, "everything packed at last. There they are."

"Yes," said the fat boy in a very satisfied tone, "there they are."

"Well, young twenty stone," said Sam, "you're a nice specimen, you are."

"Thankee," said the fat boy.

"You ain't got nothing on your mind as makes you fret yourself, have you?" inquired Sam.

"Not as I knows of," replied the boy.

"I should rather have thought, to look at you, that you was a laborin' under a disappointed love affair with some young ooman," said Sam. "Vell, young boaconstrictor, I'm glad to hear it. Do you ever drink anythin'?"

"I likes eatin' better," replied the boy.

"Ah!" said Sam. "I should ha' 'sposed that,

but I 'spose you were never cold with all them elastic fixtures?"

"Was sometimes," replied the boy, "and I likes a drop of something that's good."

"Ah! you do, do you," said Sam, "come this way." Then after a short interruption they got into the cart.

"You can drive, can you?" said the fat boy.

"I should rather think so," replied Sam.

"Well then," said the fat boy, putting the reins in his hands and pointing up a lane, "it's as straight as you can drive. You can't miss it." With these words the fat boy laid himself affectionately down by the side of the provisions and placing an oyster barrel under his head for a pillow, fell asleep instantly.

"Vell," said Sam, "of all the boys ever I set my eyes on—wake up, young dropsy." But as young dropsy could not be awakened, Sam Weller set himself down in front of the cart, started the old horse with a jerk of the rein, and jogged steadily on toward Manor Farm.

Our friends greatly enjoyed themselves in this happy Christmas gathering. But as the hero of the present story did not participate in any of the celebration, since he divided his entire time during these few days between eating and sleeping, we must leave him for the present and travel ahead several months to the time when the jolly Pickwickians next see his

beaming countenance. Mr. Pickwick was sitting in his room thinking on some of the deep scientific discoveries for which he had become famous, when he was interrupted by a violent and startling knock at his door. It wasn't an ordinary double knock, but a constant and uninterrupted succession of the loudest single raps, as if the person outside had forgotten to leave off. Wondering what it could be, Mr. Pickwick did not at once arise and the knocker continued to hammer with surprising force and without a moment's cessation.

"It is quite dreadful," said Mr. Pickwick. "Make haste and open the door." The servant hurried down and turned the handle. The object that presented itself to his astonished eyes was a wonderfully fat boy. He had never seen such a fat boy, in or out of a traveling circus, and this, together with the utter calmness and repose of his appearance, so strange in one who had been pounding with such fierceness, struck him with wonder. Still more astonishing was the steady mechanical motion of his right arm, which continued to move forward and back like a steam-driven hammer, the rest of his body being absolutely motionless.

"What's the matter?" inquired the servant. This extraordinary boy replied not a word, but he nodded once and seemed to the other's imagination to snore feebly. "Where do you come from?" inquired the servant. The boy made no sign, he breathed heavily.

The question was repeated three times, but receiving no answer, the servant was preparing to shut the door when the boy suddenly opened his eyes, winked several times, sneezed once, and finding the door open he stared about him with the greatest astonishment.

"Why do you knock in that way?" inquired the servant.

"Knocking what way?" said the boy in a slow, sleepy voice.

"Why, like forty coachmen," replied the servant.

"Because the Master said I wasn't to leave off knocking until they opened the door for fear I should go to sleep," said the boy.

"Well, what message have you brought?"

"He's downstairs," replied the boy. "He wants to know whether you are at home."

The servant, beginning to understand, hastened down to the carriage waiting without. At once Mr. Wardle came running upstairs and was soon shaking hands warmly with Mr. Pickwick.

Here we'll leave Dickens' famous fat boy, standing with his eyes shut, pounding away at a door which had already been opened.

—*Pickwick Papers*